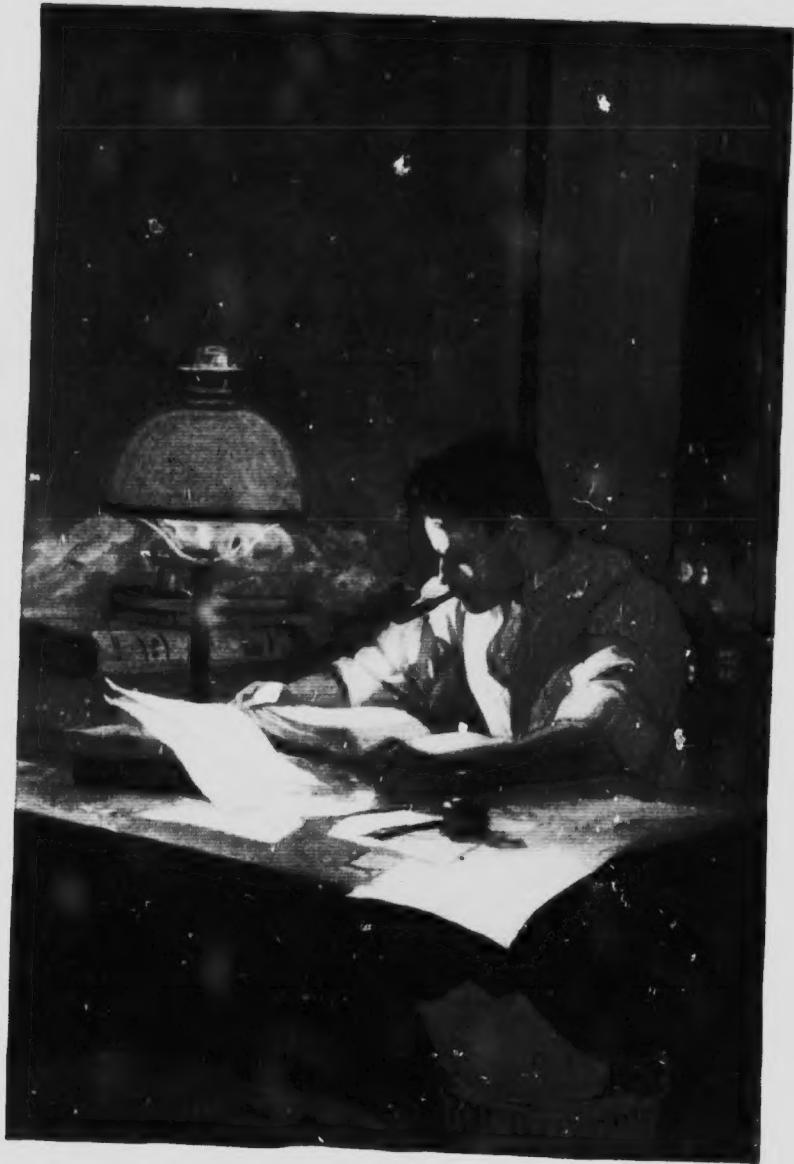


“MR. HOBBY”



I went no more afield after bugs

"MR. HOBBY"

A FERFUL ROMANCE

BY

HAROLD KELLOGG

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
JOHN R. KELLOGG



BY
D. B. BRADBURN

1898

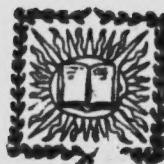


“M R. H O B B Y”

A CHEERFUL ROMANCE

BY
HAROLD KELLOCK

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
GEORGE C. HARPER



TORONTO
BELL & COCKBURN
1913

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TO GILMAN HALL

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I

REMINISCENCES

I AM uncertain whether to begin this narrative with Rose Allingham or my great-aunt Abigail Dulworthy; to start with the day I was observing the tumble bugs, or that melancholy day when I cudgeled my brains in the endeavor to discover some method of earning an income of at least five thousand dollars a year. I suppose, however, that the most logical plan is to commence with myself.

If I lived for five thousand years I could possibly be able to earn an annual stipend of five thousand dollars at my nominal profession, which was the law. But I have a shrewd suspicion that before the expiration of that period lawyers will have been virtually abolished. At the time this narrative opens, however, I had

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been able merely to attain a gross income of about one-fifth of the sum I have mentioned. And half of this went for office rent. It is obvious that in the eyes of any skilful carpenter or bricklayer my residue would be an amount wholly derisory. Admittedly it does not proclaim me a shining light at the bar. In fact mine was probably the doubtful distinction of being the most unsuccessful lawyer in the metropolis. But fortunately I had an avocation which enabled me to eke out an income sufficient to live on.

So many men, so many fancies, said the Roman philosopher. Thousands of intelligent men in the metropolis appear to have a fancy for the law. With them I have no quarrel. They form the successful lawyers. But in their ranks is no place for me. My fancy is for bugs.

I do not mean by this that I am fond of bugs individually. The cockroach and the flea do not appeal to me as desirable personalities. I have no hospitable passion to invite a company of June-bugs to dinner or keep a few pet wasps about the house. But entomology is my hobby. As a field for study the insect world fascinates

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me. . . . Incidentally I have promised a certain young woman to keep the bugs out of this book as much as possible, and, if any creep in, to avoid calling them by their Latin names.

It will perhaps puzzle the reader why I was practising law when I should be observing the domestic habits of the ant and the June-bug. The fact is that I became a lawyer just as the fuzzy caterpillar becomes a butterfly. It was not a matter of volition. The caterpillar does not think about becoming a butterfly. Its thoughts (if it can be said to have thoughts) are constantly fixed upon food. And a healthy boy's thoughts are also largely alimentary. Baseball and dinner filled a large part of my juvenile mind. I played left field in the village team at Higgsville—an inconspicuous position, it is true, but at the bat I was a terror to pitchers of rival teams. The future did not vex my horizon. I remember cherishing a vagrant passion to become a locomotive engineer. But this my father did not take seriously. And I soon realized that this ambition was vain. A highly imaginative caterpillar might just as effectively wish to become a hippopotamus. For I was destined from birth for the law. My

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father decreed it. My great-aunt, the dictator of the family, had put the final seal on the plan.

An ancestor had achieved some distinction as a judge. He was a revered tradition. I remember, when knickerbockers were still a novel garment for me, gazing awesomely at the portrait of my judicial forebear in Aunt Abigail's house. He had a long, hawklike nose, extraordinarily heavy jowls, emphasized by mutton-chop side-whiskers, and a down-curving mouth. A profound solemnity was fixed upon his pursey countenance. I'll wager he believed in an extremely hot and populous Hell. I remember wondering doubtfully if, when I grew up and assumed the ermine, I must grow to resemble this imposing personage, and I cogitated the strange metamorphosis that must overtake my little button nose. . . . Later, however, when Lewis Carroll's books were introduced to me, I observed a likeness between the portrait and Alice's Red Queen who said, "Off with his head!" Thereafter my reverence for my ancestor was infused with an element of boyish derision (which I carefully concealed) and I decided that my adult aspect would be considerably more prepossessing than the portrait.

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Higgsville, my birthplace, is sufficiently identified by fixing it in the New England hill country. My father was the local postmaster and justice of the peace and kept the village general store. I remember him as a gentle, kindly man, not very aggressive and entirely under the dominance of Aunt Abigail, who was his own aunt. My mother died when I was a mere baby. After her death we continued to live over the store. My mother had been a Southern girl and I was in charge of a black and cushiony mammy who had come North with my mother from her Virginia home. She had been my mother's nurse. She was the only person I have known who dared defy my great-aunt.

The mammy considered herself my guardian by a sort of divine right and did not permit Aunt Abigail to interfere with her régime. There were several clashes of arms between the two over my infantile person, in which, to every one's astonishment, my nurse held her own. My father was greatly perturbed by the wranglings, but managed to preserve a general, non-combative position, in which he undoubtedly received hard knocks from both

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sides. The skirmishes culminated finally in a grand battle at my aunt's house one morning as to whether stewed prunes or the juice of an orange should form one of the items of my breakfast. Aunt Abigail, I believe, stood out for prunes. I was but two years old at the time and have no personal recollection of the affair, but those who witnessed it said it was a terrible duel of tongues. My aunt strode to and fro over the kitchen hurling anathemas at the negro woman who sat in a chair holding me in her arms, jabbering back at my aunt and rolling her big eyes to follow Aunt Abigail's steady progress to and fro. Several times during the argument a physical encounter seemed imminent which boded ill for me. The hired girl fled the premises in terror and my Uncle Jeremiah (Aunt Abigail's brother) withdrew to the woodshed. Finally mammy carried me home in triumph (she weighed upwards of 200 pounds and was short-legged and asthmatic, and the distance was over a mile) and gave me a delayed breakfast of which the juice of two Florida oranges from my father's stock formed a principal item. Thereafter the two women preserved an arctic truce. But I have heard

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my aunt, who, as a girl, had been a keen abolitionist, speak disparagingly, on several occasions, of the Emancipation Proclamation. And when mammy died, a few years later, she refused to attend the funeral.

We came of an old New England family and this, along with my father's political preferment, gave us a high social position in the country. Aunt Abigail, indeed, was something of a social dictator. She lived with her brother Jeremiah in a charming old colonial farmhouse outside of the village. Jeremiah ran the farm and in his day drew an excellent livelihood from the soil. Rheumatism has made him inactive of late years and emphasized his subordination to his sister who shows no diminution of activity. Her preserves are still famous the country round, her mince and pumpkin pies defy comparison, and she brews a cherry cordial which would cause the gods of Greece to spill their butts of nectar disdainfully down the slopes of Olympus.

Aunt Abigail had another brother, Ezekiel, to whom, at the time this story opens, she had not spoken in ten years, though he lived but a scant two hundred yards away from her. Un-

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cle Ezekiel was referred to derisively as the genius of the family. He was an inventor, but my Uncle Jeremiah was unable to tell me anything he had invented.

Uncle Ezekiel wore a halo of distinction because of his ownership of the famous Dulworthy furniture. This remarkable collection was the pride of the family, the symbol of past Dulworthy elegance. Other families might boast of ancestral wealth, or prestige in soldiering or statesmanship. We boasted that we had slept for generations in beds that kings might covet, that our drawing rooms glittered with huge Chippendale sofas and lyre-backed chairs representing the highest art of Heppelwhite, that the family highboys, chests on chests, tables, sideboards and other furnishing pieces were truly incomparable. We did not run exclusively to mahogany. There were Spanish and Flemish pieces, wonderfully carved, in oak and walnut.

Though I had not seen the interior of Uncle Ezekiel's house since boyhood, I had a fairly vivid recollection of its wonders. In particular I recalled a grandfather's clock with a parchment face resembling the moon and star-

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tipped hands, and a great desk honeycombed with mysterious hidden compartments and secret drawers which popped out at one unexpectedly. The family passion about these relics is, I confess, somewhat diluted in me. But to Aunt Abigail and Uncle Jeremiah the furniture had always been a holy thing. To them Uncle Ezekiel's proprietorship was a constant source of envy and distrust. . . .

My father died while I was a student at one of the smaller New England colleges, and thereafter Aunt Abigail's house was my home. I spent my vacations there. And I suppose, with the exception of Jeremiah and Martha Peddon, I was the only person my aunt was really fond of. She had wonderful ambitions about my prospective career in the law, and followed my progress through college with as much interest as if I were a fledgling genius. I was a fair scholar. But my chief collegiate distinction was earned on the baseball team. I was the best batsman in college and clouted home many a winning run. Uncle Jeremiah, shriveled and bent, followed my athletic successes with as much enthusiasm as Aunt Abigail kept track of my scholastic achievements.

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My uncle was extremely deaf, so that one had to bawl at him through an ear-trumpet and even then he only heard what he wished. Pain had aged him so that he looked much the senior of his sister, though she had been born two years before him. Within a few years of three score and ten, all her faculties were unimpaired. She was still a fine figure of a woman and her back was as straight as a girl's. Uncle Jeremiah boasted that she "had never had a stomach." Her gray eyes were wide and keen and her complexion clear as a baby's. With her finely chiseled features, she must have been a great beauty in her day, though her chin was a trifle too prominent for a feminine type.

I wondered why she had never married. Uncle Jeremiah, in response to my hints, told me a tale of a youthful lover, one Abner Judd, a chum of Uncle Ezekiel's. He had been a sort of ne'er-do-well, an inventor, like Uncle Ezekiel. Aunt Abigail had been very much in love with him. She wanted him to settle down as a farmer, but this he refused to do. She had no faith in his inventions. In fact, though in most respects a liberal minded woman, she has always cherished a profound disgust for science

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and scientific progress. She has never ridden in a trolley car, though of late years a line passed close to our village, or in a railroad train. She never used a telephone. She "don't believe" in such things. And she emphatically refused to believe in Abner Judd's science.

The pair broke finally, partly because of this difference of opinion, partly, my uncle maintained, because of the atomic theory, but principally because of Charles Darwin.

The "Origin of Species" was a new blasphemy at that time. Judd, I imagine, had got hold of the first English edition, and with the temerity of youth, was probably inclined to flaunt the new theory about. According to Uncle Jeremiah, my aunt not only refused to believe that we are descended from monkeys, but she refused to marry a man who believed it. Abner Judd replied that there were the facts in black and white and he could not change them. A man must believe what he considered the truth. Both of them were very proud and highstrung, and after a fortnight of stormy argument ("they acted more like wildcats than lovers," said Uncle Jeremiah) Abner Judd ab-

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ruptly left Higgsville and had never been seen again.

From that day my aunt never mentioned his name. But for twenty years, according to Uncle Jeremiah, at each of Aunt Abigail's birthdays, she received a letter in Abner Judd's handwriting. My aunt never tolerated any mention of these epistles, but Uncle Jeremiah maintained that in each of them Abner Judd reiterated his matrimonial appeals. However, at the end of twenty years the annual letters, whatever their contents, stopped. Uncle Jeremiah said that the first letterless birthday was a terrible occasion. The letters had always arrived by the morning mail. When the expected communication failed, my aunt ate her breakfast in a hard silence. At noon she drove into the village and stopped at the post office, for we have three mails a day at Higgsville, the second arriving shortly after twelve. Returning from the post office my aunt shut herself in her room and for the rest of the day denied herself to the numerous visitors who came with congratulations and presents. For three days thereafter she kept to her bed with a sort of fever which almost worried poor Un-

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cle Jeremiah out of his mind. She had never, since the measles period, been sick in bed. But when she recovered Uncle Jeremiah was pleased, on the whole, with the experience.

He knew Aunt Abigail was still in love with Abner Judd. And that appealed to a twisted vein of sentimentality in him. . . .

I have mentioned Martha Peddon. Her mother, who died on giving her birth, had been a great favorite of Aunt Abigail's, and my aunt took the motherless girl to her heart.

Martha lived in Higgsville with her father, who was old and dyspeptic and had taken to himself a second wife who dominated him and hated Martha. I suppose these things increased my aunt's affection for the girl. She spent much of the time at Aunt Abigail's house, and, as children, we were playmates there.

Aunt Abigail, I knew, planned that I should eventually marry Martha. And according to the law of opposites she was the mate for me. She was dark while I was fair, capable while I was inefficient, sedate and matter-of-fact while I was excitable and imaginative. She always did the right thing while I generally did the wrong thing. She had a passion for house-

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keeping and all the activities of the home. But this very thing and all her virtues and capabilities had been dinned in my ears ever since I grew into long trousers, until it was made impossible for me ever to fall in love with Martha. I felt that I could as soon fall in love with a Sunday School lesson. Sometimes, when Martha seemed particularly efficient and housewifely, I positively detested her. But generally we were good friends and I looked upon her as a sort of sister—a distant sister.

Before I met Rose Allingham I had never had more than a cursory acquaintance with any girl but Martha.

II

I DISCOVER A NEW WORLD

IT had never occurred to me to quarrel with the idea of becoming a lawyer. The thing was ordained. Every man had an occupation just as every man had eyes and hair, and I accepted the law as my occupation just as I accepted brown as the color of my hair and blue as the color of my eyes.

I was interested in many of my courses in college, particularly those dealing with history. In my junior year I passed through a course in biology which, strangely enough, did not excite in me any particular interest, though, later on, a branch of this science was to absorb most of the interest in my life. I remember dissecting an earthworm and cataloging his rather simple interior. There was nothing about this to incite me to the study of biology. Indeed there is nothing incitive about cataloging anything. And the whole course was one great

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orgy of cataloging. Had our instructors been striving to interest the young idea in Greek literature instead of biology, they would infallibly have selected for study Homer's catalog of ships; had the course been Old Testament theology they would have prescribed the numbering of the tribes of Israel. . . . I recall one extremely serious young instructor with an excessively long nose who was devoting his life to the study of "the chick." He delivered to us two highly undiverting lectures on "the thick," as he called it—for he unfortunately suffered from a lisp. This young man dwelt in a little, foul, oxygenless den off the laboratory, along with eight melancholy hens and a melancholy rooster, whose habits he was observing and cataloging with the enthusiasm of a fanatic. His object in life was to mould his observations into a book on "the thick." The man lingers in my memory as the only interesting biological item served up to us in the course.

I found my law studies much more inspiring than dry-as-dust biology. In Higgsville we had a youthful parlor game in which the company selected some object in the room which

I Discover a New World

the person who was "it" attempted to discover by a series of questions, beginning with the query, "Vegetable, animal or mineral?" The law appeared to me a game of this sort, but on a splendid scale. Instead of trying to discover an inkwell or a piano stool, one's quest was nothing less than the truth.

My legal studies were pursued in New York, for there I was to practise. In my final year I took night courses in order to work in an office during the day and learn something of the professional routine.

It did not take me long to learn a remarkable thing. This was, that while the object of the law was to reveal the truth, the object of the lawyer was to conceal the truth. The firm I worked for enjoyed a large and prosperous practice. Our principal client at the time was a street railway magnate who was under a public investigation. He was accused of an enormous swindle. The truth in the case was contained in a certain ledger among the records of the railway. I remember my employer tapping this volume significantly and declaring to the magnate, who was vigorously dry-smoking a black cigar, that all the real evidence against

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him was in the book. "If that should become lost," declared my employer, "there would be no case." "Then you advise"—began the magnate abruptly. "I advise nothing," interrupted my employer. "But whatever you do must be done immediately." "I see," replied the magnate, and indulged in a wolfish smile. "I furthermore wish to warn you that the memory is a tricksy thing," continued my employer. "The imagination so mutilates and transforms yesterday that our present picture of it is a distortion. Bear this in mind when you are being questioned on the stand and only commit yourself when absolutely sure. And are we absolutely sure of anything in the past? It is a grave question, particularly when one is testifying under oath. The wisest course is silence. During your cross-examination by our opponents this young man, my assistant, will sit beside me. In points where discretion is advisable he will yawn or cough." "I see," said the magnate.

So my first court experience was signaling a witness away from the truth.

Imagine a parlor game, such as I have mentioned, in which the man who was "it," on

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broaching his query, "Vegetable, animal or mineral?" received the reply, "We refuse to answer," or "We don't remember." It is unlikely he would be able to discover the selected inkwell or piano stool and the game would be a farce. The company would not be playing fair.

I began to believe that the law was something of a farce because the lawyers were not playing fair. At the very outset I had begun to lose interest in the game. . . . During my last months of study I fell into a mood of melancholy disillusion. . . .

Very clearly do I recall the incident that led to the discovery of my real vocation.

I had secured my law degree. Before opening an office—I had decided to set up for myself—I was taking a sorely needed vacation which included a visit to a chum of my college days who lived in southern Pennsylvania. This man had invited several of his friends for a week or more of country sports including a series of baseball games with the team of a neighboring town. Our opponents proved to be good players and we were barely able to get two games out of the first four. However, for the fifth and deciding game the chances favored

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us, for some of us, who had grown pretty rusty, had rounded into better form.

The fifth game was very close. In the first half of the ninth inning I went to my station in left field hoping that I might get to the bat before the wind-up and help win the game.

I had squatted down on the grass. My eye was attracted by a sort of grasshopper, a beautiful creature, light green in color, kneeling under a grass leaf with its forelegs raised in an attitude of devotion. I had never seen a little creature so graceful and pious looking and, in wonder, I bent closer, admiring its slenderness and the pretty pose of its triangular head, poised upon its long neck.

While I gazed, a smaller creature, apparently of the same species, crept out of the grass and circled about the nun-like devotee. The newcomer was evidently a male and a lover. He finally approached near enough to touch one of the upraised forelegs timidly, and for a minute the little creatures appeared to be holding hands most sentimentally. Next their faces touched and the praying nymph deliberately locked her mouth in his, while the pair indulged in a long, ecstatic embrace.

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I looked up for a minute, in response to a shout. The center-fielder had run into my territory after a ball and muffed it.

"Are you asleep!" he cried disgustedly. "That was your ball. It brought in a run. Get on the job, will you?"

Not daring to shout a reply for fear of disturbing my lovers, I looked down at them again. To my amazement, the abandoned young nun was deliberately eating her cavalier. Beginning with his face, she was devouring him with the grave delight of a child consuming a sugar cookie. He made no attempt to escape. Indeed those devotional forelegs clasped him too firmly. I saw that they were armed with sharp spines and had closed about his body like a trap.

I watched this horrible feast in fascinated attention. The lady ate with voracity. In a short time she had consumed practically all of her lover except the legs and the wings. These were allowed to drop to the ground one by one until they lay in a gruesome little heap at the lady's feet. The stupendous banquet concluded, the lady wiped her mouth carefully with the back of her forefeet, and moving a short distance away, assumed her attitude of prayer.

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I glanced up. I saw one of the opposing batsmen test two hickory sticks with great gravity, toss one aside, and stride haughtily to the plate. The pitcher, with equal gravity, was twisting the ball in his hands and keeping a shrewd eye upon a young man who was edging away from third base. These things seemed very far away from me. . . . The very field on which we were soberly indulging in these trivialities was thickly populated with a strange life, and, unguessed beneath our feet, inconceivable atrocities were being perpetrated. I had discovered a new world. I thrilled with the discovery. . . . Another little lover stole out from under a leaf and approached my grasshopper vampire with mincing steps. . . .

“Hey, don’t you want no lick?”

The rival center-fielder was regarding me with amused astonishment. His side had been retired and he had come out to replace me. I walked slowly toward the little grand-stand and sat on the grass apart from the other players. . . . A new world, of flying, crawling things! An armed world in which ladies ate their lovers alive! A strange, relentless world of claws

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and stings, whose laws defied our understanding! I must know about it. How much time had I wasted on the law! I was twenty-four years old. . . .

My friend patted me on the shoulder. "Two out and they 're still a run ahead," he said. "Man on first and another on third. Wallop it out, old man."

What did this matter to me now? I had discovered the horrible nuptials of the praying mantis.

My friend handed me a bat and I tested it mechanically. There was a patter of applause from the stand as I stepped to the plate.

I struck out.

III

A GIRL AND TWO TUMBLE BUGS

MY office was in an old brownstone building. My desk was screened from the vulgar view behind a partition wall, but I was usually not to be found at my desk. My peculiar habitat was the library, a den with a single narrow window. And I was generally fussing about there miles away from the law.

Visitors to this sanctum looked without particular interest upon my cheap filing cases and my rather slender array of legal volumes. But they were always very curious about the rows of little boxes, some of glass and some of wood, labeled with Latin names, upon the shelves. These contained diminutive eggs smaller than the period points on this page, pale worms like wriggling commas, caterpillars wrapped in their cocoons of silk and mortar, fat beetles, slender members of the grasshopper family, wasp-like creatures with waists of thread and

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numerous other specimens. Most of them were alive, but I am willing to admit that the mortality in my little community was very high. The difficulty of feeding my various pensioners would have puzzled the most resourceful. When I was not engaged in this maternal labor, or in watching the romances and the domestic affairs in these little lives, I was usually seated at the center table poring over some musty volume on entomology.

Aunt Abigail had a conviction that as soon as I "hung up my shingle," as she expressed it, with the name Henry Dulworthy, all the great business men of the metropolis would flock to my door to consult me about their affairs. The name of my judicial ancestor, who sat in the Superior Court in my native state, was Henry Dulworthy, and that was the designation on my shingle. But four years of expectant waiting convinced me that the name was not a magnet in the metropolis. The Pharaohs of the business world knew not this Joseph of the bench. And my visitors were few. When they entered they beheld a rather cramped and dingy office. Barring their way to this was a shabby wooden railing, behind

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which, at a shabby oak table, dark and inscrutable, with raven-black hair neatly plastered and great, dusky brown eyes, sat J. Zinsheimer.

If J. Zinsheimer was not tapping at a typewriter he was poring over one of my law books. He served me in the double capacity of stenographer and office boy. He never mentioned his first name, but I called him Johnny. I always supposed, however, that he was named after the brother of Esau, until, one day, while he was out on an errand, a nasal voice called over the telephone and asked for Jeremiah. After this revelation, however, I continued to use the name Johnny.

J. Zinsheimer was a person of indomitable energy, a paragon of office boys. His knowledge of law would have shamed many a judge. I stood in considerable awe of him and I imagine he regarded me with a sort of affectionate pity. At first he looked upon my bug community with unmitigated contempt. There was conceivably no money in bugs and he could not understand why I wasted my time keeping an entomological boarding house when I ought to be devoting myself to building up a practice.

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But after I published in a popular magazine a series of three articles on "Socialism Among the Insects," J. Zinsheimer looked upon my worms and beetles with more favor. He knew I received \$150 for each article. But why I preferred to write for the *Entomological Journal*, which remunerated its contributors in trivial amounts long delayed, was a puzzle to J. Zinsheimer. Sometimes I am sure he despaired of me, but he always treated me with the greatest respect and willingly went out at all hours of the day to rummage City Hall Park for provender for my specimens.

My principal client—she had generally the distinction of being my only one—was a Mrs. Nolford, an elderly widow, a friend of Aunt Abigail's, who lived in Westchester County in the enjoyment of a considerable estate. My duties to her were partly of a legal nature and partly those of a real-estate agent. During the warm months, when the fields were alive with insect life, I visited her regularly twice a week, discussed at luncheon in her old mansion the financial affairs of the estate, and spent the afternoon in a tramp over the hills making the acquaintance of all the winged and crawling

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creatures of the neighborhood. These afternoons were my greatest enjoyment in life.

On a certain day in early spring I had paid my visit to my client and was rambling through the country, somewhat farther afield than was my wont, for it was a rare day for walking. I found myself finally a trespasser upon a large estate, surrounding a great rambling house in Spanish style set upon the brow of a hill. Far down the hillside was a wooded enclosure in which horses were pastured and there, I believed, I could not fail to come upon the portly *Scarabæus Sacer*, the tumble bug, as he is commonly called, rolling his ball of dung which the Egyptians revered as the symbol of the world. Ordinarily in my rambles I avoided trespass, but this opportunity was too good to be resisted. The tumble bug, glutinous buffoon of the insect world, has always been a great favorite of mine, and to-day I was in a sufficiently frivolous mood to enjoy his activities. I climbed the fence and entered the field.

My quarry was not far to seek. In the midst of a pile of largesse dropped carelessly by one of the quadrupeds, a group of six-legged scavenger beetles of several varieties was at work,

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each member of it selecting his individual feast with great activity and rolling the food deftly into a huge ball. I sat down on a stone to watch.

Each of the workers was of a Falstaffian rotundity. The sacred beetles were the larger ones and easily the aristocrats of the crowd. Encased in their black armor, which somehow suggests the frock coat, they reminded me of so many plump bankers. But no banker was ever endowed by nature with such a kit of acquisitory tools. Pincers, pliers, shovels, rakes, picks, hooks and boring apparatus, to say nothing of a turning lathe, these are all, strictly speaking, at the beetle's finger ends. And he works with a deftness and skill that would put our best artisans to shame. Why not? Principles of engineering are an instinct with him. He used the fulcrum and lever, for instance, ages before man laboriously arrived at its discovery.

The particular scarab I selected to observe packed up a ball as large as a lime. He was dwarfed beside it. Embracing this with his hind legs, he began to propel it out of the crowd, pushing it backwards and using the back

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of his toothed forefeet as levers to hoist himself along. A ridiculous, hitching motion he made of it, but I reflected that a stout Sisyphus rolling his stone uphill would not be graceful.

Inch by inch my epicure moved his festal ball steadily, until he came to a little ridge. A detour would have been easy, but the beetle had no such concession in mind. Over the ridge he must go, and the steepest way. Clearly the thing was impossible. Half way to the summit he slipped on a loose grain of sand and the ball rolled back into the hollow, tumbling him after.

Now one would expect him to make the detour. But the sacred bug disdains to learn by experience. Wildly kicking his legs about, he rights himself, renews his hold on the ball, and essays the same route over again—with the same result. Again and again I watched my blunderer try the slope, with the same *Jack and Jill* catastrophe. I must have been seated on the stone enjoying this spectacle for upwards of half an hour, when I was interrupted by a feminine voice.

"Would you mind telling me what you are doing?"

...ex-111-1

"Would you mind telling me what you are doing?"



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I looked up sheepishly and beheld a young woman in a short-skirted brown dress. Then, with another glance at the scarab, who had just experienced a particularly absurd tumble, I stood up and whipped off my hat.

"Why," I stammered, "I—I—"

With the exception of Martha Peddon, I never talked with young women. I have often envied the easy manners of many young men I have seen conversing with them. But, when brought face to face with one myself, my tongue was effectively glued. In this instance the girl had taken me completely by surprise. She was a stranger. And I had an uncomfortable feeling that she was laughing at me. At any rate, there was a suspicious sparkle in her blue eyes.

"You see, you have been sitting in our field for ever so long with your chin in your hand," continued the young woman. "My cousin Gladys Van Amsted and I watched you through glasses from the house. It is unusual, you know, to see a man dressed like a wedding guest sitting alone in the middle of a field all afternoon."

I looked at my silk hat and my frock coat—

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garments I always affected when I visited my client. Somehow the formal old lady seemed to demand it. I knew that my aunt would demand it of her attorney. But now I realized that the garb was incongruous for sitting in a field.

"I'm not a wedding guest," I said, "even if I look like one."

I was beginning to be impatient at the interruption and perhaps I showed it.

"Well, I'm not the Ancient Mariner," retorted the girl, laughing, "even if I look like him."

I cast my eye speculatively over her lithe, slender person, at her fresh, eager face with its cunningly uptilted little nose, and the soft waves of her brown hair.

"You don't look like the Ancient Mariner," I confessed, laughing back at her in spite of myself.

It was her turn to show embarrassment and I enjoyed my advantage. Besides, the flush that stole over her cheek was very pretty.

"You see," she explained hastily, "Gladys and I made a bet about you."

"A bet about me!" I repeated stupidly.

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The young woman nodded and smiled. "A pair of gloves. Gladys insisted you were a disconsolate lover."

"I'm not a disconsolate lover," I declared, with some irritation. "I have been observing the sacred beetle."

"Then I win," cried the young woman, clapping her hands. "I knew you were doing some sort of religious stunt. Please tell me about it. It's wonderfully interesting. What is the sacred beetle?"

I found myself laughing again. "My dear young lady, I'm afraid you don't win your bet," I said. "My interest in the sacred beetle is not religious at all. It's wholly scientific."

The young woman looked somewhat disappointed. "Since I came to investigate you," she said, "I think you are under obligations to explain the sacred beetle anyway. You see, Gladys couldn't come. She was expecting her fiancé, Lord Hilton, and had to dress for him. And I wanted to decide the bet. And you looked horribly interesting."

I did not quite follow this feminine logic, but the request was not to be denied.

"There is the beetle," I said, "tumbling

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down that little slope. He has been trying to surmount it for the past hour.”

She sat down on the stone with me and I explained, as concisely and as delicately as I could, the significance of the scarab’s activities. Just as I concluded, a second beetle lumbered up on the wing and settled upon the ground near the festal ball.

“A wife?” questioned my companion, staring absorbedly.

“Only an intruder come to share the feast,” I said.

The pair met amicably, and after some preliminary manœuvres, the newcomer dug his pronged forefeet into the front of the ball and proceeded to help drag it up the ascent, backing clumsily along. The other pushed behind, and thus the task was at last accomplished.

Once the hill was climbed, however, the newcomer took to sojering. He curled himself up on the sphere and the original owner was compelled to roll along both ball and rival too. Sometimes the ball was on top and sometimes the beetle, but the intruder appeared indifferent to being run over.

“Lazy little beast!” exclaimed the girl.

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The progress was slow, and there was much fumbling and tumbling, which my companion viewed with great hilarity. But at last, in some soft, sandy ground, the valiant pusher came to a stop. He left the ball and began digging vigorously in the earth. The other beetle curled up on top of the sphere and apparently went to sleep. I explained to the girl that the first scarab was hollowing out a dining hall.

"He 's a great little excavator," she said, watching the insect fling out a steady stream of sand behind him. "My aunt had some Italians digging a trench for her last week, but they were tyros beside your sacred beetle. This is a great show. It 's better than a matinée."

Soon the beetle was half-way into the sand, and then he vanished altogether. But from time to time he poked his head out and peered jealously at the ball, on which his fat and lazy assistant reposed somnolently. Once the builder ran out and rolled the ball to the very threshold, and then vanished to his task. As soon as he disappeared the other woke up suddenly, scrambled down, and began dragging the sphere away.

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"Oh, look, look!" cried the girl. "Shall we stop him?"

"Wait," I cautioned her, for she had picked up a stick to drive off the thief.

He had made about two yards, when the digger peered out again and looked warily for his precious repast. For a minute he stared uncertainly about, then he spied the receding sphere and made after it with a great play of legs. As he came up, the clever sneak reversed his position and pretended to be pushing the load back. For a few minutes they parleyed, the owner of the ball apparently protesting against the theft and the other, as my fair companion suggested, explaining mendaciously that the ball had rolled away and he was trying to stop it. At any rate, the pair rolled it back again and the owner resumed his delving. His comrade made no further attempt at pillage. And presently the dining chamber was completed, the feast rolled in through the narrow entrance hole, and the proprietor and his companion, after scrambling in, carefully stopped it up, concealing all trace of the habitation.

My companion jumped up and clapped her hands again.

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"That was splendid!" she cried. "You've given me a great treat. I suppose you find a whole world of these funny little creatures running about under our feet."

"Yes," I replied, "but few of them are funny. The vegetarian is rare. Most of the insects are carnivorous and some of them are cannibals. So that it is a world of relentless murder and bloodshed."

I marked with a broken stick the spot where my beetles were feasting.

"Next week I shall come trespassing again and break into the banquet hall," I said. "They will eat steadily for about ten days."

"May I come too?" asked the girl quickly. "I'll try not to be in the way. Perhaps you can show me some more wonders."

"I shall be glad of a companion," I said. "I shall be here Tuesday at 2:30 o'clock."

We had been walking across the field and now arrived at the rail fence. This embarrassed me, for the rails were too close together to permit the young woman to crawl through, and I feared that a skirted girl would have trouble climbing over. But the young woman approached nonchalantly. She put her two

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hands on the top rail and lightly vaulted over.

"Can you do that?" she smiled over the barrier.

I vaulted after her as well as I could in my cumbersome garments, but my silk hat was jolted off and rolled in the dust.

She picked it up, laughing. "It's rather absurd of you to dress up like this to hunt bugs, Mr. Entomologist," she exclaimed.

I explained to her that I was n't an entomologist man at all, that bugs were simply my hobby, and I told her about my client.

"So you 're only a lawyer," she observed, wrinkling up her nose. "I know several lawyers and they 're not very interesting."

"But I am a very amateurish lawyer," I pleaded.

From the field where we had been one could see only the upper windows of the house on the hill, but now we came into full view of it, with the westering sun shining grandly on its white walls.

"That's a wonderful mansion," I said. "You live there?" I began to feel extremely mean and poor.

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"Oh, no, I'm not nearly so aristocratic as that," cried the girl. "That's Aunt Van's house. I'm only a poor relation on a visit."

We had come to a path leading directly across the fields toward the house. Up the hill an automobile was winding toward the mansion along a graveled road. In it were a chauffeur and two men.

"That will be Lord Hilton," said the girl. "I shall get a scolding for staying out so long."

I stared at the automobile. Both the young men were good looking.

"I must be running for a train," I said. And then I added, "Is Lord Hilton twins?"

The girl's eyes sparkled. "The other doesn't count," she said. "He only comes to see me."

I puzzled over this for a minute, and then she held out her hand. "Tuesday at two-thirty," she said. "Au revoir Mr.—Mr. Hobby."

Laughing, she ran up the hill as gracefully as a boy.

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I stared after her for a minute, and then walked slowly down toward the main road,

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hotly conscious of three things: First, that I was an ass; second, that I intensely disliked the young man in the motor car who was not Lord Hilton; and third, that I had neglected to ask her name.

I looked forward to the following Tuesday with an enthusiasm that was not wholly entomological.

IV

AN INVITATION TO LUNCHEON

I AWOKE Tuesday morning with a feeling that something was amiss. And when I looked out of my window I saw to my dismay that it was raining. It was a steady rain, apparently, and looked as if it would last the day.

I dressed disconsolately, went to my office for an hour and took a train for old Mrs. Nolford's. The good lady noticed that I was absent-minded and gloomy. She declared that I was not in good health and at luncheon she insisted that I should prolong my visit while she brewed for me, after an infallible recipe of her own, some camomile tea. Just after she spoke the sun came out.

I extricated myself with difficulty from this kindly offer, and, on the plea of business, tore myself away immediately after luncheon and sped off, across country through the wet grass, the skirts of my frock coat trailing behind.

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My young woman was awaiting me. She was sitting in the midst of the field on the stone from which we had first watched the sacred beetle. As I climbed the fence, she hailed me and came forward. "Hello, Mr. Hobby," she said.

"My name is Robert Dulworthy," I said.

"Mine," she retorted, "is Rose Allingham and I am very naughty."

"Why are you very naughty?" I asked.

"Because I spent the whole afternoon recently in the company of a strange bug man," said Rose Allingham. "At least my aunt appeared to think it an evidence of shocking depravity and the worst of it is that my cousin agreed with her. They were both terribly disturbed by my appointment with you to-day and my aunt sternly forbade me to keep it. So here I am."

Here was a complication. I had not regarded our meeting as particularly clandestine. It was not exactly conventional, I knew, but I did not dream that we were breaking any social law.

"I don't see anything naughty about it," I said.

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"That," observed Rose Allingham, "is probably because you have no sense of naughtiness. Neither have I. But after that scolding I would n't have come to-day anyway if it was n't for your frock coat. A frock coat is so conventional, you know. It's a sort of chaperon. And besides I wanted to see the sacred beetles at their feast. I'll just take a peep at them and then run back to the house and spend the rest of the day being violently proper."

"And I shall spend it in being simply violent," said I.

I was highly disappointed, but I determined, at any rate, to make the tumble bugs last as long as possible.

Alas, however, for my plans! Probably some of the horses had trampled the stick I had set up to mark the scarabie rathskeller. At any rate, it was not to be found. We searched about diligently, but discovered no trace of it, and finally I declared that the beetles must finish their banquet undisturbed. Rose Allingham pouted.

"I suppose I had best be getting back to the ^{re}se," she said.

But I was not to be so easily discouraged.

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"Half a mile back over the fields I discovered a very interesting colony of mason bees," I declared. "This is near the close of their building season and they were hard at work with stone and plaster. I planned to show them to you. But now I suppose we must abandon that."

Rose Allingham looked doubtfully toward the big house and wrinkled up her nose at it. "It would be highly improper," she said.

"And you will probably get your skirt wet in the grass," I added. "I had not thought of that before."

"Nonsense, Mr. Hobby," said Rose Allingham. "What do I care for that?"

The reversion to my nickname made me nod.

"I have walked three miles 'cross country to show you a bug exhibition," I pleaded. "Now you may rely on me to dismiss me."

"Bless his little heart!" exclaimed the young woman unexpectedly. "Come along. Come along with propriety! Since I'm ready, I might as well go entirely. Besides, it's in the house alone."

"alone?" I questioned.

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"Aunt Van goes to New York in the car every Tuesday to see the hairdresser and Gladys goes with her for a music lesson," said Rose Allingham. "That's why I was able to be naughty."

"I do wish that I should always have a tender nurse or hairdressers and music teachers."

"I find the mason bees. Rose Allingham was with delight at the dexterity with which they built their little tower homes of wax and mortar, and at the fine smoothness of the plastered interior, which, under my magnifying glass shone like polished ivory. No rough edges there for the tender grub to hurt itself. I explained how the bee stores her home with honey paste, lays an egg therein, and seals the hole so that the baby will be safe from intruders."

"But where is the husband?" asked my companion.

"The husbands are sorry loafers," I said. "They never come home to help, but spend their time getting drunk on honey while the wives do all the work."

"Nasty brutes," said Rose Allingham. "I'm glad I'm not a bee girl."

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We spent a delightful afternoon, but it was all too short, for Rose Allingham had to be back before her aunt returned.

“I’m wildly curious about your bugs,” she said, when she had pointed out that it was time to leave. “I shall get some bug books and begin to study them myself.”

“But can’t you come next Tuesday?” I said. “I want to show you some of the sword-girt mothers who go out hunting big game for their flesh-eating babies. Those are the most interesting of all.”

“Don’t tempt me, Mr. Hobby,” she said.

“We would find them in an old garden,” I said. And, with stray hints about these armed matrons, I tried to tempt her. As I talked we passed a deserted house with an old garden. “The very place!” I exclaimed. “It all cries out to you to meet me.”

Rose Allingham stopped and stared at me with accusing eyes. “These bugs will be my ruin,” she declared. “I am an utterly abandoned girl.”

And as I left her she said: “I shall be sitting on the porch.”

We met for four successive Tuesdays. We

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watched the little mothers with the swords, digging homes in the earth—little chambers the size of olives—for their progeny. We saw them go forth to hunt and come home dragging their prey, in some cases weevils, in others, beetles larger than themselves. I showed Rose Allingham how thoroughly the weevil was cased in armor and how infallibly the mother huntresses found a joint to penetrate, under the thorax, and how, with one stroke of the poisoned sword, the nerve centers of the unfortunate bug were pierced, paralyzing the victim. The shrewd mothers did not kill. Their babies, to be hatched in a fortnight, would demand fresh meat. So the game was paralyzed and left alive in the nursery, the egg deposited—on one of the victims—and the mother, her task completed, sealed up the house and fled her maternal cares.

"Imagine," cried Rose Allingham, "a ~~h~~ man mother compelled to build her house and then sally forth to bring home live hippopotami for the children. These little housewives make me feel terrible ineffective."

She learned many wonders in these days, but I was learning about something infinitely more

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interesting than all the armed mothers of the insect world. I had discovered a girl.

I had never met any one so thoroughly alive, so keen spirited to wring the utmost drop of joy out of every moment. It seemed to me that she must drink in more enjoyment through her five senses in a day than Martha Peddon did in a year. The color of a leaf, the shape of a flower—things I would scarcely notice—thrilled her with little ecstasies. Her eyes were infinitely sharper than mine. She was, I acknowledged with reluctance, a better observer. Several times in the course of our four days she put me to shame. I felt like a musty old beetle, plodding and sluggish, associating with a darting dragon fly. . . . She flung herself at life with a gay, eager abandon.

In her society I forgot my aunt, I forgot Martha Peddon, I forgot that I was an unsuccessful lawyer with a joke of an income. I suppose I tumbled head over heels in love. . . .

On our fourth Tuesday I noticed that Rose Allingham appeared somewhat subdued. And toward the end of the afternoon she said: “This is the last day I shall meet you, Mr. Hobby.”

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My heart dropped into my boots. I had not realized before what her comradeship meant to me. The motor car man who was not Lord Hilton swept into my mind immediately. He was her lover. Perhaps they were engaged. . . . I felt as if my spine had been extracted.

"Don't look so scared, Mr. Hobby," said Rose Allingham, with a laugh.

"Don't you want to see me any more?" I asked, pitifully. My voice sounded as if all the joints of articulation were rusty.

"Of course I do," exclaimed my companion, laughing again. "But I can't continue to meet you secretly any more. I've been deceiving Aunt Van, and I'm ashamed of myself. Conscience is bothering. So if you wish to continue your bug lessons, you must find another way."

We stood in sight of the Van Amsted mansion. I looked up at it and it seemed a haughty place, monumental and insuperable.

"Of course you're right," I said wistfully. "If I only knew some one who could introduce me to your aunt! But I might as well wish to meet the moon." I looked up again at the big house and sighed.

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“You *are* a resourceful man,” exclaimed Rose Allingham, wrinkling up her nose mockingly at me.

“I’m about as resourceful as a hoptoad,” I admitted in melancholy tones.

“A good, lively hoptoad may be full of invention,” replied the young woman, with spirit. “And you are the man who discovered three new beetles!”

She stood frowning thoughtfully and tapping her foot on the ground.

It was true. The known coleoptera had been enriched by three new varieties through my discoveries. I had classified three fat, shell-encased bugs that no one had ever noticed before. And now I was unable to discover a way to continue my friendship with Rose Allingham. I glanced again at the formidable house.

“You might ask me to call,” I said doubtfully.

“Now is n’t that clever of you!” exclaimed the young woman. Her eyes laughed at me impudently.

“It’s the only thing I could think of,” I muttered, apologetically.

“Oh, it’s all right. I was amused merely

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at the length of your cogitations," she reassured me. "I was growing afraid that I should have to take the initiative. I suppose you expected me to get down on my knees and implore you to call."

I assured her that I had no such idea. "I hesitated because the magnificence of your aunt's house appalled me," I said. "I am not accustomed to making calls in a palace. In fact, I don't believe I ever called on a girl before."

Rose Allingham gurgled gleefully. "You'll be like a new specimen," she cried. "You'll be terribly frightened at Aunt Van. She's awfully formidable. I'll have you at lunch Saturday and you can tell her all about the bugs."

She clapped her hands and laughed until the tears came.

"May I really come to lunch?" I asked. "How can you arrange it?" It appeared to me a tremendous thing.

"I'll 'fess up about everything to Aunt Van to-night and tell her I've asked you," said the young woman.

"I'll never dare march up to that house alone," I declared indecisively.

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“Boo!” said Rose Allingham. “Aunt Van won’t eat you. She’s really very kind-hearted.”

An idea had been growing in my mind. “Suppose I come at 10 o’clock and meet you on the porch of the deserted house,” I remarked in a casual tone. “We could look up that colony of ants we saw.”

“Wretch!” exclaimed the young woman.

“I’m sure you’d be interested in the ants,” I declared.

“Beast!”

She bade me good afternoon and started away, but a few paces off she turned and made a face at me.

“Did you say 10 o’clock?” she inquired.

“Hurrah!” I exclaimed triumphantly.

Without another word she ran off up the hill.

V

THE ESTHETIC ADVENTURE OF MY FINGER NAILS

WHEN I reached the deserted house on Saturday morning Rose Allingham was seated on the porch. Beside her were a thermos bottle, a towel, and a small metal basin containing a piece of soap and a small scrubbing brush. As I approached I noticed various other utensils laid out on the top step on which she sat, among them a flexible steel file, a diminutive pair of scissors with curved blades, a lean knife-bladed instrument with an ivory handle, several pointed strips of wood and a little cardboard box. Rose Allingham looked proudly at this array of apparatus at which I stared in amazement.

"Do you contemplate dissecting the ants?" I asked.

"I contemplate an operation, but you are the subject," she replied.

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“Tell me the worst,” I demanded.

“Oh, it’s not a serious operation. Only your finger nails.”

I held my finger nails up and stared at them stupidly. “What’s wrong with my finger nails?” I asked.

“Everything,” Rose Allingham replied sweetly. “They’re the most atrocious looking finger nails I ever saw. Aunt Van is very particular about finger nails.” She paused a minute and added: “So am I.”

“They look all right to me,” I asserted stoutly, glancing alternately at Rose Allingham and my fingers. I had scraped the horny tips particularly clean that morning with the nail blade of my pocket knife and I had felt consciously proud of their immaculateness.

Rose Allingham stood up with a scornful sniff and spread out beside mine her slender little digits with their delicate pink tips.

“See any difference?” she inquired.

“All the difference in the world,” I admitted. “But it’s scarcely a fair comparison. What, pray, do you propose to do about my finger nails?”

“Manicure them,” declared the young woman

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firmly. "I don't believe they've ever been manicured."

"It never occurred to me—" I began.

She took two of my fingers and scowled at them accusingly.

"And I believe you clip your nails," she said.

"Of course I clip my nails," I admitted.
"Did you expect me to grow talons?"

"Nice people never clip their nails," she asserted, shaking her head. "They file them."

This was a new idea to me. I never bothered my head about my finger nails. So long as I kept them reasonably clean, I considered that I was doing my full duty by them. And of course I clipped them. At Higgsville the nail file and the orange stick were unknown—at least in male circles. As for manicures, I had seen them in barber shops, creatures with ornate coiffures, who, when they were not presiding mysteriously over the digits of elderly gentlemen, embarrassed me by their presence during the hair-cutting operation. Somehow I always associated them with chorus girls. There seemed to be something essentially devilish and risky about getting oneself manicured. I should as soon have thought of asking one of

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these young women to operate on me as of trying my luck at a stage door.

But now my finger nails had been declared, by this astonishing young woman, atrocious. She held my care of them in derision. Socially they were entirely impossible. I still stared at them guiltily as I turned these things over in my mind, revolving schemes of reformation for the future.

"You can sit down beside the ant hill and tell me all about the inhabitants while I make you presentable," continued the young woman. "It will all be very comfy and instructive."

So in a few minutes we were seated beside the ant hill. Rose Allingham spread her paraphernalia out beside her, and, snatching my thumb, began filing away vigorously at the horny tip.

"This," she declared, "is probably the toughest nail in the world. I feel as if I were shoeing a horse."

"It's a rough, country hand," I admitted. "I'm none of your filbert-tipped gentry."

"You are to tell me about the ants," admonished my companion, as she bent over my finger. "Obviously I can't both work and talk at the

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same time, and if you keep staring at me that way I shall get embarrassed."

I suppose I was staring. But Rose Allingham's ear, at close range, peeping out coquettishly from under her wavy brown hair, was a thing to stare at. I began to tell her about ants, but I don't know what I said. My mind would not fix itself upon ants. In fact I was quivering with Rose Allingham's clasp of my hand. No young woman had ever held my hand before. I felt a curious, tickling sensation in my spine.

The young woman was apparently oblivious of my presence, so long as I continued to hold forth about the ants. If my discourse lagged, she sternly bade me continue. Otherwise she was wholly absorbed with my fingers. She scolded each one in turn, as if it were a sentient individual.

Finally the nails were filed to satisfactory ovals. Then the young woman poured some water from the thermos bottle into the tin basin and plunged one of my hands in. The water was hot. My fingers felt parboiled. I squirmed, but she held me firmly by the wrist as if my hand were a dirty, ecalcitrant, small

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boy. "Please continue your interesting lecture, Mr. Hobby," she said.

My hand was thoroughly scrubbed and soaked. Then Rose Allingham began to do remarkable things to the cuticle at the base of my nails. She prodded and pushed it with her sticks, cut it vigorously with her scalpel and trimmed it with her diminutive scissors. It was a painful operation. Some of my fingers bled, at which she rated them soundly. But I bore it all stoically. I continued to talk about the ant.

Another vigorous scrubbing succeeded this vivisection. Then the young woman gave my nails a sound polishing, using as a brush the palm of her hand, until they shone resplendently. This being completed to her satisfaction, she held my hands up in turn and regarded the nails critically.

"Now," she said, "your hands look almost human."

They were rather elegant. I acknowledged it. I was amazed at their splendor. My fingers looked like the fingers of some strange, dandified young man. But sharp, shooting pains in them reminded me that they were my

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fingers. The flesh about the nails was unused to being slashed and prodded. It resented it. My finger ends smarted as if they had been dipped in acid.

Presently Rose Allingham gathered up her paraphernalia and we walked up to the big house.

Besides Rose Allingham's aunt, Miss Van Amsted and Lord Hilton sat down at the luncheon table. It was for me a remarkable meal, not so much because of the amount and variety of the food, but because of the service and accomterments. I had never before sat at table without a tablecloth. At the Van Amsteds' the dishes were placed on little ovals of lace. We were served by noiseless automatons who snatched one's plate away in a wholly miraculous manner as soon as one neglected it for an instant. I could have before me a perfectly good lamb chop, and, while I waited to make a remark, behold it had disappeared and in its place stood a salad. It was only by shrewdness and agility that one could encompass a meal.

I was awed by the splendors of the house (to me it was like a great museum with its

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heavy furniture and wonderful pictures and tapestries) but not, so much as I had anticipated, by Mrs. Van Amsted. Perhaps I had grown so accustomed to my great-aunt that other elderly women had no terrors for me. I felt that Mrs. Van Amsted was not so formidable as Aunt Abigail. She was of the same type, but a less perfect specimen. Her chin was less like Gibraltar. Her complexion was obviously employed by the day, whereas my aunt's cheeks still retained a natural glow of health. And finally, in comparison with Aunt Abigail's erect slenderness, it was obvious that if it were not for the discovery of steel and the plated jaws of the whale, Mrs. Van Amsted would be a fat, flabby old woman.

Her conversation reminded me of the flight of a butterfly. She fluttered from topic to topic with amazing inconsequence, lighting for an instant on a new play or a new book or a new divorcee, and then flitting off again, before I had found anything to say about the particular subject in hand. In my heavy-footed conversational progress, I consistently lagged about three topics behind her. Lord Hilton, who seemed a brisk, pleasant fellow, invariably had



It was for me a remarkable meal

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his relevant word to chime in with. I admired and envied his agility. But I floundered hopelessly.

Moreover, I was horribly conscious of my resplendent finger nails. It seemed to me that they must create a sensation at any luncheon table, and momentarily I expected Mrs. Van Amsted to fix her eye upon them and inquire about their remarkable trimness and glossiness. But somewhat to my astonishment I could discover no one casting the most furtive glance upon my fingers. The digits were ignored. They were accepted as a matter of course. I glanced stealthily at Lord Hilton's nails and they were as dandified as mine. Miss Van Amsted's were also beautifully filed and polished, and her mother's looked as if a maid had spent the morning caring for them. I was apparently in a society where the finger nail was considered a thing worthy of the utmost artistic solicitude.

My scrutiny put me more at my ease, but the conversation still eluded me. I cursed my lack of viveliness. I was conscious of being a social failure.

Rose Allingham, however, came to my rescue.

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She dexterously led the conversation to bugs. I could describe the most marvelous things, she declared, going on under their ~~very~~ noses. "Tell Aunt Van about the sphex," she would say. And again: "Tell about the praying mantis."

I told about these and related incidents of insect life observed on Mrs. Van Amsted's own property, while Rose Allingham beamed upon me and Lord Hilton expressed a polite interest by occasional ejaculations of "Reahllly!" or "My word!" Miss Van Amsted, I fear, was not entertained by my narratives. A dark, languorous beauty with remarkably ornate hair, she regarded me with an air of boredom. But Mrs. Van Amsted listened, at first with mild curiosity, and then with growing concern. I had observed her watching me furtively throughout the meal, as if she wished to discover why her niece had invited such a silent, stupid person to luncheon. And now I surmised that my ability to talk made her nervous and she feared I had interested her niece too deeply in my work.

But her mind was working on wholly different lines.

Adventure of My Finger Nails

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Dulworthy, that there are many of these creatures upon my grounds?"

"Myriads," I replied promptly.

"Ugh! It makes me feel quite creepy. I shall speak to my farmer about it. I fear he has been neglecting his duty."

I assured her that many of the creatures were useful to the flowers and some helped to fertilize the soil, but she dismissed my assertions abruptly, apparently on the ground that I had a personal affection for all sorts of vermin.

"The creatures are quite impossible, Mr. Dulworthy," she declared. "I shall spare no effort to have them exterminated."

Immediately after luncheon she summoned her farmer, a bent, apologetic ancient who stood in the doorway wafting a pungent odor of cows.

"I hear, Twiller," she said, "that the grounds are overrun with vermin of the most atrocious habits. What are you doing to get rid of them?"

"Ma'am," he stammered, nervously fingering his hat and staring at her with amazement written in his mild, blue eyes. "Ma'am—vermin, ma'am?"

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"All sorts of creeping, crawling, flying things," continued Mrs. Van Amsted accusingly.

"There be bees and wasps and beetles," said the ancient. "Is it them you mean, ma'am?"

"Precisely. They must be exterminated."

"Yes, ma'am." The ancient scratched his head dubiously.

"See that it is done immediately," demanded the lady, and dismissed him.

"Countrymen are *so* unreliable," she remarked to me after he withdrew. "They have no sense of cleanliness." She immediately launched into a vivacious description of the disadvantages of living out of town.

"The servant problem does not vex you, Mr. Dulworthy?" she inquired.

"I board in town," I replied, smiling to myself.

"Yes. We stay at the Plaza, too, during part of the winter. But hotel life is wearisome, is n't it?"

I explained that I did not live in a hotel, merely in a boarding house, at which confession, Mrs. Van Amsted appeared greatly astonished.

Adventure of My Finger Nails

We were to go for a ride in Lord Hilton's car in the afternoon. Before we started Mrs. Van Amsted contrived to have a few minutes with me alone.

"Do you know Mr. Thomas W. Manor?" she asked. "Entomology is his hobby. I believe he has won considerable distinction in the scientific world."

I called to mind an aged millionaire, an incorrigible amateur in entomology, who, in the fortunate days of his youth, had stumbled upon a new coleoptera and had since been boring the entomological world by perpetually discovering other "new" species which were familiar to every student save himself. His wealth obtained him a hearing. But his long treatises on the obvious were a joke among cognoscenti.

I admitted politely that I had heard of Mr. Manor.

"His son Bobby is a constant visitor now that my niece is staying with us," continued Mrs. Van Amsted. She dropped her voice to a confidential whisper. "Perhaps there has been no formal engagement as yet, but they are interested in each other extremely. It would be, of course, an ideal match. Bobby has a pes-

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itive genius for affairs and he will succeed to all his father's estate. You really must meet him."

The image of the handsome young man I had seen in the motor car with Lord Hilton the day I had met Rose Allingham flashed painfully before my eyes. I felt stunned and bewildered. All the blood in my body appeared to be pumping into my head. And at the same time I heard myself murmuring some polite inanities at Mrs. Van Amsted, who watched me curiously.

Lord Hilton appeared in the doorway dressed for the road, with a long duster and a cap for me to wear. The girls were just behind him.

"What are you two talking about so solemnly?" asked Rose Allingham.

"Oh, just gossiping about you, my dear," said Mrs. Van Amsted.

"I don't appear to be a particularly lively topic," commented the young woman, looking at her aunt with suspicion in her eyes.

"A very serious topic indeed," replied Mrs. Van Amsted lightly as she led the way to the car.

It was exquisite torture to me to sit alongside of Rose Allingham and realize that she

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practically belonged to another. The very fact that we were flying along in a luxurious motor car, that Rose Allingham was accustomed to a life of motor cars and great houses and many servants, made my pain the keener, made me seem the more hopeless and insignificant. Of course Bobby Manor was the man for her. I contrasted his wealth and his "genius for affairs" with my dismal poverty and my absolute lack of mere efficiency in "affairs." He was a golden youth, and I—I was incapable even of working up sufficient law practice to live on.

I must have been a melancholy guest. A constant merry chatter went on about me, but I had not the heart to respond to it. I was too dolefully conscious of the remoteness of Rose Allingham's life from mine. Ordinarily the rare luxury of an automobile trip over the spring-clad Westchester hills would have inspired me with a boyish delight. But now, for all I saw or cared, we might have been rolling through a desert.

I was heartily glad when we reached the house again. Mrs. Van Amstel gave us some tea and then Lord Hilton kindly volunteered to drive me to the railroad station. My hostess

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had afforded me no opportunity for a word with her niece alone. She kept the girl by her side to the end, and I thought I saw her breathe a sigh of relief as I climbed into the car with Lord Hilton.

I remembered the young man chattering admirably about my bugs as he guided the car.

“Remarkable little beasts, old chap,” he said, as the train came up. “Quite extraordinary. Hope you’ll come and tell us some more.”

He shook my hand cordially.

In the train I fell into a more hopeful measure of thought. Staring at my glossy finger-tips, I reasoned that Rose A. Leigham would not have spent over an hour manicuring them if she was engaged to be married to another man. Not unless she was a flirt. And I knew she was no flirt. I would throttle the person who suggested such a thing.

As soon as I reached the city I hastened to a drug store.

“I want a steel nail file, some enamel powder and a rose stick,” I demanded, unblushingly.

“A rose stick? Do you mean an orange stick?” inquired the clerk.

“Of course. An orange stick,” I said.

VI

HOW I CAST ROSE ALLINGHAM OUT OF MY HEART

MY boarding place was an old red brick house with a wrought iron trellis, off Irving Place, that had probably in its prime seen aristocratic days, but now, with the up-town pressure of trade, was left stranded in a district of warehouse and office buildings and had fallen to the decadent state proclaimed by a white card pasted above the doorbell which bore the legend "Furnished Rooms." The little chamber I occupied was in the rear. It contained for furnishings merely an iron bed, a bureau with the most recalcitrant drawers in the world, a small table and two chairs. To Mrs. Van Amstel it would probably have appeared impossibly dismal and squalid, but as a matter of fact it was fairly comfortable and quite clean. I was accustomed to sit in this chamber at night reading entomological works in French or German and smoking innumerable



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“Mr. Hobby”

pipes of tobacco. The French works I raced through joyously—I had foresworn a pair of shoes and gone without lunches for over a month to secure the seven wonderful volumes of Fabre—but the German always proved heavy going for me.

Between the Saturday of my visit to Mrs. Van Amsted and the succeeding Tuesday I smoked many nocturnal pipes in my room and sat up to hours that must have increased appreciably my landlady's gas bills, but my studies progressed not at all. I was busily engaged in casting Rose Allingham's image out of my heart.

This was accomplished by a rather complicated mental process. I knew that Rose Allingham lived with her father and her father's unmarried sister in New York. Her mother was dead. The father was a coffee merchant who enjoyed a moderate degree of prosperity. He did not dwell upon such a high peak of opulence as Mrs. Van Amsted, but I had gathered from Rose Allingham that they lived in a house in a good neighborhood and were accustomed to the moderate luxuries of life. These things I considered and passed to a dispassionate review

Rose Allingham

of my own condition and prospects. In this way I proved by irrefutable logic that it was folly to think of Rose Allingham. I admitted that I had no right to cherish her image in my heart. It was as absurd for me to be in love with her as for a naked, tropical savage to be in love with the North Pole. With this I packed her out of my thoughts and determined to pursue my serene life of incompetent lawyer and enthusiastic student of insect life.

Thereupon I would recall Rose Allingham's lithe, slender figure, the merry sparkle in her blue eyes and her curiously charming habit of wrinkling up her nose whimsically and "making a snoot" at me. Her "snoot" was certainly the most delightful thing in nature. And I would remember the wonderful softness of her brown hair, and the daintiness of her strong little hands and her narrow little feet. . . . By that time I would have to start over again to prove by irrefutable logic that it was folly to think of Rose Allingham.

When I went to see old Mrs. Nolford on the following Tuesday I declared to myself that I would return direct to my office in the city. But it seemed that I had no sooner left my

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client when I found myself at the deserted house, my former trysting place with Rose Allingham. On the way I had been telling myself fiercely that I had merely come to make final observations of the colony of ants. But when I arrived and Rose Allingham was not there, I knew that the ants were a farcical excuse. I hated the ants. I wanted Rose Allingham and nothing else.

Wandering aimlessly about the deserted garden, I wished for courage to go boldly to the Van Amsted house and ask to see her. But I did not dare. Mrs. Van Amsted had pointedly not asked me to call.

Finally I sat disconsolately beside the ant hills. The little colony was in commotion. A plague had evidently struck it, for many of the inhabitants were crawling about the ground helplessly, apparently in a dying condition. The healthy ones were dashing excitedly in and out of the entrances. Many were at work preparing a new home a few yards away at the foot of a tree stump and others were busily staggering from the old dwelling to this domicile under the burden of larvæ or eggs. Ordinarily I would have been intensely interested

Rose Allingham

in this hasty migration. Now I watched it indifferently. She had not come.

After a time I heard footsteps across the garden and jumped to my feet to see Rose Allingham approaching. But my happy smile of welcome faded when I beheld a man with her. He was the motor car man.

"There he is Paul Prying upon the ants, Bobby," she cried gaily, and introduced me to young Manor. He was a fine, smooth-shaven, frank-looking chap, with a very determined mouth and chin, somewhat inclined to stoutness. He shook hands with businesslike brevity.

"The old dad was a bug enthusiast too," he said. "Many a time he 's missed his dinner out bugging and never noticed it. Queer. Only thing he was ever interested in except the stock market."

"Your father is well, I hope?" I inquired noticing his preterit.

"On his last legs, I 'm afraid," said Bobby Manor, with decent respectfulness. "Brights. It 's in the family."

My murmur of condolence was interrupted by exclamations from Rose Allingham who had discovered the dismal case of the ant colony.

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She wanted to know all about it and I explained as best I could.

“By Jove!” exclaimed Bobby Manor with a laugh, as I was concluding. “You’re just as nutty about bugs as the poor old dad. I never could understand this hobby business of going in for booze or gambling or collecting postage stamps or pictures or bugs. There’s nothing in it. It seems just a waste of time.”

I was painfully conscious of the fact that there was practically “nothing in it.” “Have n’t you any waste time?” I asked.

“Very little, and I spend it studying railroad reports,” he said. “That’s all in the day’s work after all. But I suppose I have a sort of hobby—though it’s not a waste of time. Whenever I feel tired and in need of relaxation I darn my own socks.”

I joined in Rose Allingham’s laughter.

“You see,” explained the young man, “when I was a kid we were very poor and mother taught me to darn. I don’t have to do it now, of course, but servants are lumpy darners and, besides, it’s more soothing than smoking. I’m a grand little sock-healer, too.”

“You’d make an ideal husband, Bobby,”

Rose Allingham

Rose Allingham exclaimed, while I winced at her familiar tone and the glance the young man cast upon her. "I'll wager Mr. Dulworthy wouldn't know a darning needle if he sat on it."

"My method is to wear holes in my socks and chuck them," I confessed.

"Extravagant wretch!" cried Rose Allingham, wrinkling her nose at me.

"Do you spend much time over your bugs?" asked Bobby Manor abruptly.

I confessed that I spent practically all my time.

The young man whistled with astonishment. "I should think it would knock out your law business," he said. "The dad never let it interfere with business, I'll say tha for him. But he was a wonder. He could discover a new bug and bust into a new railroad all in the same day. But there's no money in bugs."

I smiled as I thought of some of the "new" bugs Mr. Manor had discovered, but I was compelled to confess that I wasn't a "wonder" and my insects probably did hurt my legal business.

"I believe you're worse than father," ex-

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claimed the young man, and he stared at me with a frank curiosity. Presently he took out his watch and declared that he must return to the house to get some stock market reports from town over the telephone. Rose Allingham went with him. I thought she looked at me rather wistfully as he said good-day, as if she wanted to tell me something. But she left it unsaid. And on my way home it was small comfort to believe that she wished to say that she was engaged to Bobby Manor.

I determined to make one more attempt, at any rate, to see her alone on the next Tuesday. Mrs. Nolford, however, to my dismay, insisted upon driving me off after luncheon to inspect a bit of property she contemplated purchasing. With the obstinate selfishness of age she overruled my violent protestations of urgent business in town, and, to soothe me, amiably exhibited all the family photographs in an album during the interminable wait for the carriage. I looked over the property, and, I am afraid, urgently advised her to buy it because I secretly believed the price to be too high. I am a gentle person, but I was torn with a wild desire to choke the old woman to death while

Rose Allingham

she dallied about the place, plucking some flowers and gossiping with the stolid German woman who occupied it.

Then to crown all the exasperating delay, she insisted upon driving me to my train. But this I would not allow. "I am off for a stroll in the country," I said.

"But I thought you had urgent business in town," said Mrs. Nolford in astonishment.

"I have missed my appointment now," I declared. "I have a slight headache and a walk will do me good."

"Let me take you for a drive instead and have you back for tea," urged the old woman. "Come, you must stay to tea."

"I insist upon walking," I roared at her, and bidding her an abrupt farewell started off at a great pace. Once I glanced back to see her staring after me in amazement. Probably she thought me insane.

It was late when I reached the deserted house, fully five o'clock, and of course Rose Allingham was not there. I loafed about for a while in a state of high exasperation at the world in general and Mrs. Nolford in particular, and then I gathered up such courage as I had and

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walked firmly toward the Van Amsted house. I determined to storm the mansion, to brave the frigidity of Mrs. Van Amsted, if need were, but at any rate to see Rose Allingham.

As I stepped out of some bushes that bordered the Van Amsted grounds, I saw a motor car starting from the house. In it were Rose Allingham and Bobby Manor. They were conversing intimately and did not notice me. I stepped back into the bushes and, screened from view, watched the car until it was out of sight. Then I went home.

I was firmly convinced that they must be engaged to be married.

VII

UNCLE EZEKIEL'S WILL

I FOUND a postcard awaiting me in my room in Aunt Abigail's neat, old-fashioned handwriting. It read:

Ezekiel Dulworthy died of heart failure at two o'clock this morning. I thought he would have blown himself up with his science years ago, but a miraculous Providence permitted him to pass away quietly in his bed like an ordinary Christian. Please come immediately. The funeral will be Friday morning.

It was characteristic of Aunt Abigail to send a postcard, rather than a sealed note, even in a matter so personal, and of course she would never have done anything so radical as to telegraph.

It was now Wednesday evening and I should have to leave immediately. So instead of the lonely, brooding evening I had dreaded in my hall bedroom, I found myself engrossed with

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my packing and with little time to mope. The enforced activity braced me. The prospect of visiting my home town was pleasing. Now that Rose Allingham had passed out of my life like a glorious dream, a mirage, the world seemed a desert, barren of sympathy and love, in which Higgsville was the sole oasis. The thought of seeing my aunt and Uncle Jeremiah cheered my morose spirits.

As for Uncle Ezekiel, whom I had never really known, I had no personal feeling over his death. "I wonder if he left Aunt Abigail the Dulworthy furniture?" was my thought. I dared not contemplate Aunt Abigail's state of mind if he had willed those precious household goods out of the family.

On the train, before I fell asleep, I tried resolutely to exclude thoughts of Rose Allingham by piecing together what I knew of Uncle Ezekiel's curious life. He was, as I have said, an inventor; but in Higgsville there was a singular lack of information about his inventions. In fact there was a singular lack of information about Uncle Ezekiel himself. He had been the "crank" of our village, the mystery of the countryside. A recluse, a hater of children

Uncle Ezekiel's Will

and a bachelor, he lived alone with an elderly married pair who kept house for him. But during July and August each year he vanished utterly. It was said that he took the train at Faring, but what was his destination or the object of this annual migration no one knew.

In my boyhood Uncle Ezekiel was vested with the weird interest of a fairy chanter. Strange smells emanated from his house, and sometimes unexpected clouds of smoke poured suddenly from the windows, or one could hear muffled explosions or the pounding of an engine. "Thar 's 'Zekiel Dulworthy discovering perpetool motion," the passing rustic would say with a grin. I remember one day all the windows of the place were shattered simultaneously by a violent eruption, and when Uncle Ezekiel next appeared in public he wore a bandage about his head. But no explanation was ever vouchsafed for these mysterious phenomena. We boys always watched the man curiously as he passed to or from the village store, a lean, shabby figure in excessively frayed trousers, with probably no hat or necktie. I was rather proud of the attention he excited, but he never took notice of me. In fact

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I imagined his mild blue eyes never observed the scrutiny of his neighbors. They were too closely fixed upon his dreams.

I also recall him riding precariously about the roads on one of the old-fashioned high bicycles and how all we boys watched him with envy and the grown-ups spoke derisively of this achievement. Aunt Abigail regarded his performances upon the contraption as a deep humiliation to the family. But it was not until after he brought the first automobile to Higgsville that she broke relations with him.

Uncle Ezekiel had his automobile shipped from a Pennsylvania factory to the railroad town of Faring, about four miles from our village, and from Faring he ran it home himself. On the road the first Higgsvilleite he met was Aunt Abigail driving her gray mare to Faring to do some shopping. I don't know whether Aunt Abigail or the gray mare was more startled at this horseless vehicle snorting along the highway. My aunt, at any rate, continued to sit straight and hold the reins with a firm hand, but the mare bolted. She finally brought up against a telegraph pole (my great-aunt abominates telegraph poles), tore a wheel from the

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buggy and spilled Aunt Abigail into a ditch.

Aunt Abigail picked herself up, borrowed another buggy from a farmer, and drove back post-haste to Higgsville, where she compelled my father, as justice of the peace, to make out a warrant for Uncle Ezekiel's arrest. News of the warrant, however, must have got to Uncle Ezekiel, for when good-natured Tom Gale, the local deputy sheriff, went to serve it, he found the house bolted and barred and Uncle Ezekiel, from between the shutters of an upper window, squirted some atrocious chemical over Tom which made the poor fellow smell as if he had had an encounter with a peculiarly efficient skunk. Tom retreated ignominiously. He was afraid of Aunt Abigail, but was still more afraid of Uncle Ezekiel, whom simple folk considered something of a sorcerer. So he told my father he would resign his office rather than serve that warrant.

There the matter rested. My aunt stormed about for a time, and, I believe, even consulted a lawyer in Faring, but as Uncle Ezekiel made overtures through my father and offered to pay for all damages, she decided to drop the case. However, she never condescended to notice

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Uncle Ezekiel after that. And Uncle Jeremiah sided with her. He had become something of a religious devotee, after rheumatism withdrew him from active farm work, and regarded the state of mind of his brother, who was an avowed atheist, with horror. “That’s what comes of messing about with those sinful machines,” he used to say, pointing a gnarled finger at Uncle Ezekiel as that awful example sped by in his devil wagon. “He’ll break his neck! He’ll break his unregenerate neck, and then”—Uncle Jeremiah pointed darkly toward the interior of the earth and twisted his features in a horrible wink.

I hoped Uncle Ezekiel had disappointed the predictions of Uncle Jeremiah in respect to his destination, as he had disappointed them in the mode of his departure. His quiet death, I found on my arrival, was apparently a source of resentment in Higgsville. I detected this first in the attitude of Tom Gale, who met me at Faring at dawn and drove me to Higgsville. Tom was garrulous on every topic save the matter which brought me to Higgsville. And when I at last mentioned Uncle Ezekiel, he merely remarked, with a note of disgust, his astonish-

Uncle Ezekiel's Will

ment that my uncle had not come to some terrible and singular end. And Tom merely reflected the general opinion. Higgsville folk had been waiting for years for my uncle to blow himself up and the inhabitants felt he had cheated them. As I began to appreciate the extent of this callous lack of sympathy, I was filled with pity over the lonely death of the poor old hermit.

As Tom drove me up to Aunt Abigail's house, Uncle Jeremiah came hobbling to the door. His face wore a curious expression of dismay and he appeared pitiable agitated. This emotion over the death of a brother he had not associated with for a decade appeared incongruous to me. But as soon as Tom Gale departed, Uncle Jeremiah made it plain that his perturbation was not caused by sympathy over Ezekiel's death.

"It 's gone, Henry," he whispered hoarsely, in an awed tone.

"What?"

"She 's in a state, I can tell you," he continued.

Uncle Jeremiah had acquired the habit of speaking pronominally, so that his meaning

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was sometimes obscure. “She” invariably applied to Aunt Abigail. And I was too thoroughly a Dulworthy to doubt the significance of “it.” For one thing alone would Uncle Jeremiah act like a Frenchman announcing the disappearance of the tomb of Napoleon, or an ardent Roman Catholic who discovered that the treasures of the Vatican had been done away with by an eccentric Pope.

“You don’t mean the furniture’s gone?” I cried.

My uncle nodded his head. “Every stick of it,” he exclaimed vehemently. “I’ll bet the old scoundrel sold it off to buy stuff for his experiments.”

I caught something of Uncle Jeremiah’s dismay. “What does Aunt Abigail say?”

Uncle Jeremiah flung his arms out hopelessly. “Her tongue’s frozen tight. I never saw her in such a state.”

Aunt Abigail, it appeared, was at Ezekiel’s house and the servant had orders not to wait breakfast for her, so Uncle Jeremiah and I sat down together. I thought the old man had shot his surprise, but I found he had another in store.

Uncle Ezekiel's Will

"The old fox left a will," he chuckled over his coffee.

A will! Uncle Ezekiel was not the sort of person to make a will. No one had suspected that he possessed anything to will.

"Judge Dilly has it," added my uncle, vigorously mixing a huge portion of cigar into his oatmeal in defiance of table etiquette. "He's going to read it after the funeral."

Judge Dilly of Faring, who had served a term on the county bench, was a type of the barefoot boy with cheek of tan who, by a persistent application of copybook maxims, had risen to a position of wealth and honor. He was reputed to be the meanest, as well as the wealthiest man in the county, and it was a popular tradition in Higgsville that he habitually plucked the silk threads out of dollar bills and sold them in bulk. He was, moreover, as parsimonious with his time and his words as with his money. Aunt Abigail had always detested him. According to Uncle Jeremiah he had been a sniveling, cowardly little boy, a playmate of Ezekiel and Abner Judd, and Aunt Abigail resented his success because Judd had proved a failure. During his term on the bench he and my aunt had

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had a falling out over a matter of social prestige, in which she scored a victory, and since then, on the rare occasions when they met, their attitude was one of frigid hostility.

It struck me that Judge Dilly would not have permitted himself to be drawn into the will unless Uncle Ezekiel had left something substantial. Hermits had hoarded considerable wealth before, and why not Uncle Ezekiel? I wondered.

Meanwhile I saw little of Aunt Abigail, who was greatly preoccupied with the details of the funeral arrangements. But I found myself thrust much into the society of Martha Peddon, who was extremely solicitous about my health and the progress of my law business and the quality of the food I was getting in the city. It seemed Martha occupied herself with me to the extent of neglecting her duty to Aunt Abigail. But possibly Aunt Abigail abetted her in this soft intrigue.

I was glad when the funeral was over and we gathered at Uncle Ezekiel's house, without the omnipresent Martha, for the reading of the will. The services had been held at my aunt's house and I now discovered the reason. Never

Uncle Ezekiel's Will

had I seen a house in such disorder as Uncle Ezekiel's. The sitting room had been transformed into a chemical laboratory, containing a great array of mysterius bottles and test tubes and jars. At the fireplace Uncle Ezekiel had evidently been experimenting with brick-making or pottery, for the room was strewn with raw clay and fragmentary bits of baked or burned material. One of the bedrooms was a machine shop, crammed confusedly with a great number of engines. And other chambers displayed a litter of miscellaneous junk, ranging from large metal cylinders to fine-toothed jigsaw blades. I saw my aunt peering about disgustedly and I imagined her housewifely arms aching for a broom.

The will was read in the dining room, which, with the exception of the kitchen, where my uncle's caretaker and his wife held sway, and the attic bedroom of this aged pair, was the only habitable place in the house. My aunt took a chair at one side of the big oak table (it was splotched with huge stains and in places disfigured with burns, as if Uncle Ezekiel had conducted his experiments even during meals). I remember she sat straight as a grenadier,

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her hands folded in her lap, in contrast to Uncle Jeremiah who leaned forward, a bent and weasened figure, on the opposite side of the board. In one hand he held his great ear-trumpet.

Judge Dilly, a large, frock-coated person with imposing side-whiskers, stood beside my uncle and shouted the will, in his great bass rumble, into the funicular mouth of the trumpet, glancing across the table from time to time over his eyeglasses to observe the effect upon my aunt of particular passages. I sat in a corner and watched all three of them.

The will was a curious document. It was of rather recent date, written in epistolary fashion apparently by Uncle Ezekiel himself, the legal terms probably being filled in by Judge Dilly. The Judge was named as executor. Uncle Ezekiel left his house and the small farm attached thereto to the old man and his wife who had catered to his physical needs for many years.

“I have been a happy man and therefore I die penniless,” the will continued. “The residue of my estate consists of the family furniture, and while I have a sentimental desire to

Uncle Ezekiel's Will

continue this in the family, I also have a sentimental desire that the family should be worthy of it. Therefore I shall not leave it to my incompetent brother Jeremiah, the sniveling Calvinist. My sister Abigail has some strength of character, but she suffers from a serious mental astigmatism. She will not or can not see the world as it is. She remains static in a flying universe. But I propose, for her own good, to make her fly. I leave her the furniture on condition that within four months of my death she make a flight of at least five minutes in an aeroplane."

"Hey?" shouted Uncle Jeremiah, sharply pressing the ear trumpet upward, so that it threatened Judge Dilly's chin.

"In an aeroplane," roared Judge Dilly.

Uncle Jeremiah chuckled audibly and glanced slyly at my aunt who sat listening serenely, as if the document had been the most ordinary will in the world.

"A second condition has to do with my dear colleague and friend Abner Judd, concerning whom the said Abigail Dulworthy has acted like a petulant child. Abner Judd desired to marry my sister. I was proud to have a man

“Mr. Hobby”

of his attainments seek an alliance with our family. But at the last moment the match was prevented by my sister's caprice, due to silly pride. Therefore, if within the time limit set for the first condition, hereinabove specified, said Abner Judd again asks said Abigail Dulworthy to marry him and she refuses him, the furniture is forfeit.

“In the event of either of the above conditions not being complied with, I bequeath the Dulworthy furniture to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.”

Uncle Jeremiah looked scared as Judge Dilly deliberately folded the will and stowed it in a little black bag. But my aunt's countenance remained impassive.

“Where is the furniture?” she asked.

“That,” replied Judge Dilly, with a contortion of his features that probably represented a smile of triumph, “I am instructed not to divulge until the time limit has expired. I can assure you it is in safe hands. Is it your intention to meet the conditions of the will, Miss Dulworthy?”

“If Henry can learn to run one of the absurd machines, I shall permit him to take me

Uncle Ezekiel's Will

up in it," declared my aunt, rising with an air of decision that filled me with dismay.

"And will you marry Abner Judd if he asks you?" asked Uncle Jeremiah unexpectedly.

"Certainly not," responded my aunt.

"Then why," persisted Uncle Jeremiah, "do you still wear, tied to a blue ribbon round your neck, half of that cent you split up with Abner Judd more than thirty years ago?"

A flush rose upon my aunt's throat and spread over her face. She bit her lip and I could see she was ashamed of that flush and was fighting it. But it would not down. And suddenly she stepped round the table to Jeremiah.

"Nonsense!" she cried, leaning down and shouting into the ear trumpet. "Nonsense!"

VIII

THE UNEXPECTED VISIT

I KNEW nothing whatever about flying machines. I had never seen a flying machine. I was not interested in flying machines. But here I was suddenly and unexpectedly thrust into the business of learning to become a chauffeur of flying machines. I found myself pledged to make a trip in one of them with a captious old woman who was habituated to regard such aerial innovations with suspicion and loathing. The prospect did not cause me joy.

Of course there was every reason why my aunt should select a professional airman, rather than myself, to take her up. But she refused to hear of this. "I should as soon think of trusting myself to a madman," she declared. "I shall go up with you, or forfeit the furniture." Nothing I was able to say could change her intention. And I was too deeply under obligations to her to refuse pointblank.

The Unexpected Visit

Besides, I felt it my duty to recover the Dulworthy furniture.

The day after my uncle's funeral, I read in a Boston newspaper of the death of Henry W. Manor. To his splendidly opulent career the obscure life of Ezekiel Dulworthy afforded a sorry contrast. The paper in a lengthy editorial commended him as an example to the youth of the land. Among his pallbearers were two United States Senators, the Governor of New York State and a squad of multimillionaires. His vast estate would all go to his son.

Mr. Manor had fathered the idea of the first International Entomological Congress, which was to be held late in August at Merryport, a little village on the Maine coast where he had his summer home. The millionaire was to defray all the expenses of the Congress and bug enthusiasts were coming from all parts of the world to read papers and compare notes. Naturally I was greatly excited over the Congress and hoped I could afford to attend. I was elated to note that young Manor had announced the Congress would be held despite his father's death.

Before I read of Mr. Manor's death my aunt

“Mr. Hobby”

had astonished me by announcing that she would not make the aeroplane ascent at Higgs-ville.

“If I made myself ridiculous here I would be ashamed to show myself again,” she declared. “I want to get as far away as possible. You and Martha can find some quiet place for me, preferably at the seashore or on a lake. If that ridiculous contraption tumbles with us, as it probably will, we might as well fall into the water.”

Martha, who knew about the Congress, would consider nothing but the Maine coast. After I returned to New York she wrote that my aunt had rented Plum Island, a place about five miles from Merryport.

“You can arrange to make the ascension about the time of the Congress,” she wrote.

Of course it was splendid of Martha. But somehow I disliked to owe the Congress to her cleverness and care.

Meanwhile, after my return to New York, I had gone down to the Long Island plains and enrolled as a pupil in the aviation school. My duty already weighed heavily upon me.

As a boy I had always been attracted by the

The Unexpected Visit

young man who ran a bicycle repair shop in Faring. His diminutive workplace was a marvel of untidiness. It contained more dust and grease and confusion than one could believe possible in such constricted space. And amidst this litter of dirt and machinery the smudgy young man worked with indefatigable energy and indefatigable seriousness. He had the air of a man who was initiated into the mysteries of a new existence and was fully conscious of the obligations and advantages of his position. He now runs a garage with the same serious energy. And I found this note of devoted grimness pervading the aviation school.

My instructors were, indeed, like devotees of a new religion, rather than plain mechanics. Man's destiny, as they conceived it, was to fly. They were inspired with a passion to spread the gospel of flying. Many of them appeared to have no personal life apart from the machines and some slept at night on cots in the hangars, under the spreading aeroplane wings. They even talked an unfamiliar, aerial jargon. I imagine they conceived God in the form of a huge bird.

My principal instructor was a Mr. Timmins,

"Mr. Hobby"

a nervous, keen-eyed young man with a terrible scar across his left cheek and two fingers missing from his left hand. He explained to me casually one day that the fingers had been crushed in a fall, received during his first flight, and had to be amputated to the knuckle. He was patiently tolerant of my abysmal ignorance. Even the gasoline engine was a mystery to me. This, accordingly, was my starting point. I spent many grubby days in a machine shop and many nights in study, before I was permitted to associate with the sacred winged steeds. It was dull work, but I plunged into it vigorously. I needed a narcotic to make me forget Rose Allingham. And when I took my first flight with Mr. Timmins, the thrill of exhilaration I experienced made me believe myself successful. But this only lasted a few minutes. I never was able to work up any real interest in flying.

Indeed, though I went to the deserted house no more, Rose Allingham's image would not be effaced. In spite of my efforts to cast it out, it appeared to trouble my heart more keenly every day. And with it would obtrude the picture of Manor with his great fortune and

The Unexpected Visit

his air of assured efficiency. I envied him. I envied all men who had the easy habit of success. And I despised myself. Life tasted flat and stale to me.

There were interminable days in my office, interminable nights in my mean bedroom, when I sat moping, unable to work. I even lost interest in my bugs. No longer the scientific curiosity pricked me afield to peer into busy nooks and crannies. I began to doubt whether I was cut out for an entomologist after all. And I neglected my live specimens outrageously.

An aversion to food came upon me. I reached a state where I hated the sight of my boarding house table, at which I accomplished dinner and breakfast. The food, as I now recall it, was plain and rather monotonous, but not half bad. But at this period the ever recurring slabs of flabby beef filled me with loathing. And the stewed prunes! They seemed omnipresent, interminable. To this day I shudder when I have to face a stewed prune.

I could feel that J. Zinsheimer noticed my lassitude and desolation. I caught him watch-

“Mr. Hobby”

ing me at odd moments, speculating sympathetically, I suppose, on my state of mind, and I am ashamed to say that this irritated me. His great brown eyes were like two reproachful stewed prunes!

I was prowling aimlessly about the office one afternoon, about three weeks after my last visit to the deserted house, when I saw J. Zinsheimer's eyes fixed keenly upon me. He had been sitting at his table behind the little railing, wholly immersed, as I thought, in a huge law volume—Moore on Torts, I believe—and I had supposed him oblivious to my movements. But probably my restlessness disturbed him.

“What are you staring at me for?” I demanded curtly.

“I was thinking we might be getting some more law business, Mr. Dulworthy,” said J. Zinsheimer respectfully. He always used the term “we” when speaking of the office.

“What made you think that?” I asked, frowning.

“It seemed to me you was losing interest in the bugs,” said J. Zinsheimer, apparently rather frightened at his temerity, but determined to go on to the end, “so I thought you

The Unexpected Visit

might be interested in getting a hustle on for some more law business, Mr. Dulworthy. Bugs is all right, sir. But there ain't no money in bugs."

That was what Bobby Manor had said. I stood, frowning thoughtfully and thinking myself rather a fool. "Please excuse me, Mr. Dulworthy," faltered J. Zinsheimer. "I oughter mind my own business."

"That's all right, Johnny. Don't worry about me," I said and withdrew hastily to the library. J. Zinsheimer returned with apparent enthusiasm to the arid regions of Moore on Torts.

I took up Büchner's "Aus dem Geistersleben der Thiere" and turned resolutely to the chapter entitled "Die Termiten oder weissen Ameisen." But I could not read. I was too thoroughly despondent. I sat staring sightlessly at the German text, my thoughts plumbing the depths of misery.

J. Zinsheimer presently broke in upon my joyless musing. His face, as he stood in the doorway, was a study in sympathy and contrition.

"Perhaps I'd better be getting some fresh

“Mr. Hobby”

leaves for those caterpillars, Mr. Dulworthy,” he said.

“All right, Johnny.”

“I’ll go down to Battery Park. Things are fresher down there.”

I thanked him and returned to my book. But my eyes wandered from the German script, and white ants had no charm for me. And as I sat there, idly fingering the pages, I heard a gentle tapping at the outer door of my office.

Going to the entrance of my private room, I called, “Come in!”

The door opened, disclosing Rose Allingham. She stood upon the threshold, somewhat flushed and apparently a trifle nervous.

“I hope I’m not intruding on ponderous labors, Mr. Hobby,” she said.

I could not reply. I merely feasted my eyes upon her silently. Her image had been with me for many days, but now I realized how inadequately I had visioned her living freshness and sweetness. I felt my blood pour into my face and then pour back again as suddenly. My knees weakened.

Perhaps my stare slightly embarrassed her. “Aren’t you going to invite me in?” she

The Unexpected Visit

asked. "I was lunching downtown with father and dropped in to see your library with the bugs."

I sprang forward with polite assurances of welcome and conducted her straight to the library.

It was the first time I had been alone in a room with her. I watched her looking about, with exclamations at my array of specimen boxes, and the intimacy of the situation sent little thrills of delight and little stabs of pain coursing through me.

Rose Allingham was peering into the boxes. "Why," she cried, wonderingly, "the poor things are nearly all dead!"

It was true. The box cages were a series of shambles. Pinpoint larvae and grubs and fat beetles lay decaying there, and only a few hardy bugs tottered weakly about and some of my caterpillars still survived, crawling listlessly among some faded leaves.

"They look as if a pestilence had swept the place," said Rose Allingham.

"I'm afraid it's simply neglect," I explained, ruefully. "I haven't been a very good warder lately."

"Mr. Hobby"

"You haven't been ill?" asked Rose Allingham, scrutinizing me with some anxiety.

"No, I've merely lost interest."

"But I thought your studies were the absorbing interest of your life?"

I hesitated a minute. "So did I," I said, rather bitterly, I fear. "But—"

"And you've also neglected your finger nails, sir," she declared accusingly.

I looked down at my fingers, feeling more ashamed than over my neglect of the bugs. "I had not expected to see you," I said.

"I expected to see you," said Rose Allingham. She paused a little over this. "That's always the way," she added in mock dolefulness. "When you set your heart upon a man, he does n't come any more."

"I thought," said I awkwardly, "I should be in the way. You see, I did come again, but I was late and you were not there."

"Did n't you get the note I left?" she asked quickly. "We were expecting Bobby, Mr. Manor, and I had to return to the house. So I left a note on the steps, asking you to call. Afterwards the note had vanished so I supposed you got it. The nasty wind must have

The Unexpected Visit

snatched it up. But what, you ridiculous Mr. Hobby, made you think you would be in the way?"

"Something your aunt said," I declared.

"Surely Aunt Van couldn't have been rude," she cried. "I can't understand that. What is it? What did she say?"

"It was about Mr. Manor."

Rose Allingham frowned thoughtfully for a minute and then she burst into hearty laughter. "Aunt Van is incorrigible," she cried. "Some time ago she decreed that Bobby and I should be married, and all the world appears to have accepted this—except myself and Bobby. We two are old chums, Mr. Hobby, and our fathers were chums before us. But as for marrying—well, Bobby has n't asked me to marry him yet and I don't believe he will until the Hudson River runs up Mt. Marcy. If you had sisters of your own age and knew anything about girls, you would n't have believed Aunt Van."

I felt as if the pyramids had been lifted off my heart. "I suppose I don't know anything about girls," I confessed.

"Your ignorance is unfathomable," de-

"Mr. Hobby"

clared the young woman with decision. "But still, if you knew as much about girls as you do about bugs, you would be horrid."

She was seated upon my table, with her back to the door, swinging one neatly shod foot and regarding me with a judicious smile. Somehow, as I looked at her, my heart began to thump wildly. The sweetness of her swept through me in gusts of intolerable longing. "I only want to know about one girl, about you," was the apt fatuity tickling the tip of my tongue, but I could not articulate it if my life depended on it. All that I could fetch out was a little, gasping cry.

Rose looked at me curiously and then she turned away and gazed at her foot. I saw the color rise upon her neck and I burned to take her in my arms. In a sudden burst of passion I forgot my poverty and my incompetence, in that one desire. The thrill of my first flight with Mr. Timmins was a mere titillation to that wild, heart-throbbing desire. With a sob, I leaped forward, my arms outstretched.

And then I stopped short, aware of J. Zinsheimer standing in the doorway, his hands full of leafy twigs and branches ravished from the



Rose calls at the office

The Unexpected Visit

park. Astonishment would probably be a mild term to depict his emotions at seeing me about to embrace a young woman in my den. He dropped some of his branches on the floor and stared with an expression of abject horror. Then, without a word, he flung the rest of his burden upon a chair and vanished.

But the charm was snapped. I fell back to earth with a bump that made me realize how Mr. Timmins must have felt when he crashed down in his first aerial flight. I dropped my arms and Rose Allingham jumped off the table.

"That's my office boy," I said hastily. "He's the commissary department for my bug menagerie."

"He's a dear," said Rose.

We talked for a while about wholly impersonal things, but all the sparkle had died out of our conversation. I felt horribly embarrassed and Rose Allingham, for the first time since I met her, was shy. And presently she said she must be going. I did not even have the heart to ask to see her again.

As I went out with her, to put her on a car, I noticed J. Zinsheimer, bending over his *Moore on Torts* at his desk, blushing violently. He

"Mr. Hobby"

did not look up as we left the office. And when I returned alone he was still blushing. He said nothing to me, but there seemed to be in his attitude a subtle disapproval. Several times during the afternoon I caught him gazing at me with wistful, questioning eyes.

For a time this irritated me. But Rose Allingham's visit had so changed the aspect of existence for me that I soon forgot J. Zinsheimer's glances. I felt re-created in a new world. And with an enthusiasm I had been a stranger to for many weeks I set to work among my specimens, exalted with happy dreams.

IX

MR. ALLINGHAM

MY DEAR MR. HOBBY: I intended to have you ask if you could call on me, but somehow this slipped out of my mind which is a very little one and does not hold many ideas. I make it a rule—which you may have noticed—never to take the initiative by inviting a man home. If one of the wretches wishes to waste an evening on me, I trust him to make his desire known.

But you appear to be an exceptionally helpless person where girls are concerned. Socially you remind me of some of the sprawling beetles you have shown me. So I shall make an exception and ask you. Otherwise you may be so long working up your courage that I shall be an old woman with a cap and spectacles and you may be annoyed to find I am unable to receive you because I have an engagement with my grandchildren. I am terribly fond of grandchildren and intend to have ever so many of them.

So do come and see me some evening. The family is not at all formidable. There are only father and Aunt Gertrude. Father, I admit, has been getting a bit crusty of late, but if you break through the crust he's as nice as apple pie. And Aunt Gertrude is a dear. She weighs 260 pounds—but the Lord had to make her body that size to get her heart in.

Sincerely,

ROSE ALLINGHAM.

“Mr. Hobby”

P. S. I have just read this note over and am frightened because it seems so bold. So if you don't get it, you'll know it is too bold to send.

R. A.

This letter awaited me at my office in the morning. I read it through breathlessly three times, overwhelmed with the fact that it was my letter and Rose Allingham had written it. It appeared to me a marvel of dainty whimsicality. And moreover it seemed to establish a new intimacy between Rose Allingham and me.

After I had thought over the letter for a time, I decided that I must immediately have a talk with Rose Allingham's father. I knew, if I called upon her, her presence would again weave a spell over me and I should be caught with an irresistible impulse to seize her in my arms—with no intrusive J. Zinsheimer to snap the charm. I felt that I must not enter the Allingham home under false pretenses. My intercourse with Rose had already been sufficiently unconventional. First I must see her father and confess my sentiments and the state of my fortunes.

After I had arrived, amid considerable agita-

Mr. Allingham

tion, at this conclusion, I inspected my clothes and was somewhat dismayed at their shabbiness. My coat was threadbare at the seams, one of my trousers' legs was a bit frayed at the bottom and my shoes were sadly worn at the heels. Unquestionably I looked shabby. But, I reflected, it was scarcely the part of candor for me to attempt to appear a swell. I was, in fact, a shabby young man. As such, if at all, Mr. Allingham must accept me.

While I was taking an inventory of the vulnerable points in my apparel, J. Zinsheimer appeared, with shining eyes, in a state of considerable excitement.

"If a telephone call comes for me this morning, can I go out, Mr. Dulworthy?" he asked eagerly. "I got a little business on hand."

"Certainly," I said. "Any time after I get back. I'm going out now myself."

J. Zinsheimer hesitated a minute, as if he were about to impart some portentous secret, but finally he appeared to change his mind and returned quietly to his desk and Moore on Torts. I was too greatly preoccupied with my own affair to speculate on the remarkable agitation stirring J. Zinsheimer's unimpassioned

“Mr. Hobby”

breast. For an instant it occurred to me that he might be getting a new job, and with a pang I realized that it would be difficult to duplicate J. Zinsheimer. Thereupon I started out and forgot all about him. . . .

Mr. Allingham was a coffee merchant with an office on Water Street. This I found to be a thoroughfare lined with old red-brick buildings which had probably once been private residences but were now abandoned to the merchants. From the stores and warehouses emanated vague, spicy smells of the Far East. Beside the door of a rather dilapidated three-story structure a brass plate with words, “Richard Allingham—Coffees,” arrested me. Terribly frightened at my own temerity, I entered and stood just within the threshold of a large bare room, permeated with a pungent odor of raw coffee. I can never smell coffee beans to this day without recalling my first encounter with Mr. Allingham.

The big room was deserted save for two clerks in their shirt-sleeves. One was in the extreme rear, fussing over some chests, and the other sat not far from me at a round table, the edge of which was lined with a number of fine

Mr. Allingham

china cups in which some beverage was steaming. Beside each cup was a tray on which coffee beans were piled and the little mounds varied in color from light cream to the darkest of browns. The young man was revolving the table top and sniffing alternately at each cup as it came in front of him.

Rose Allingham's father had seemed to me such a personage that I had expected my passage to be barred by officious office boys and clerks who would be embarrassingly inquisitive about my business. I had feared, indeed, that I might somehow betray my real mission and become a figure of derision. But neither of the visible clerks paid the least attention to me. And, after I had stood uneasily beside the door for several minutes, I approached the young man at the table.

"I wish to see Mr. Allingham," I said.

"In the rear," he said shortly, without looking up from his business of sniffing.

I walked back through the shop, past rows of large cases, until a door of opaque glass marked "Private" barred my progress. At this I knocked.

"Come in," called a curt voice.

"Mr. Hobby"

I found myself in a dusty cubby-hole with exceedingly dirty windows which apparently were not used for ventilation and served no illuminative purpose. Under a droplight, at a huge, untidy roll-top desk, a man sat scowling over a ledger. I had pictured Rose Allingham's father as a rather shriveled, dyspeptic person, but the man at the desk looked amply nourished—an erect, red-faced gentleman with a bristling gray mustache and sharp black eyes and the air of a colonel. I looked in vain for any resemblance to Rose.

"Mr. Allingham?" I queried. Though my knees were wobbly, my voice was steady enough.

He surveyed me morosely. "I don't want any books or life insurance or rat traps," he said.

"I—I came to see you about your daughter—Rose," I said. I felt myself blushing.

"Hem!" said Mr. Allingham, with a nervous twirl at his mustache—he was the sort of man who says "Hem!"—"What is it?"

"I met Miss Allingham, quite by accident, some weeks ago, on Mrs. Van Amsted's grounds," I said. "I saw her—several times."

Mr. Allingham

"Hem! You 're the bug fellow my sister-in-law spoke of," said Mr. Allingham. He pressed a button and a light flared above my head under which he surveyed me with an air of irritation. There was a chair close at hand but he did not proffer it, so I remained upon my feet.

"Your daughter has asked me to call, but I thought it best not to enter your home under false pretenses," I continued weakly.

"Good Heavens, man, what are you driving at?" he exclaimed.

"I am in love with your daughter."

"In love with my daughter! I say, in love with my daughter!" He stared at me incredulously.

"I wanted to explain my position candidly to you and see if—that is—if I could be received as a suitor for her hand." I wrung this out with great difficulty and felt somewhat relieved.

"Hem!" said Mr. Allingham. "Hem! And what does Rose say to this, eh?"

"She doesn't know anything about it, as yet," I said.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Allingham and looked more at his ease. Then after a minute.

“Mr. Hobby”

“This is most extraordinary. Hem! Most extraordinary. In love with my daughter! Why you ’ve only seen her two or three times, eh?” He puffed out his cheeks and regarded me judicially. I felt him tabulating the manifold items of my shabbiness.

“Seven or eight times,” I amended. “I fell in love with her the first day I met her.”

“Preposterous!” he cried. “People don’t fall in love that way—except on the stage. Possibly such a thing might happen among the lower classes—but among educated, well-regulated people—hem!—never. I never heard of such a thing. You come rushing in suddenly, without an introduction, and say you are in love with my daughter. What do I know about you? Nothing. You may be a duke or a millionaire or a thief or a beggar for all I know. Hem!”

“I wish to tell you about myself,” I said.

“Oh, well,” said Mr. Allingham, with a deprecatory wave of his hand. “There ’s not much use talking to me. But fire away. I ’m a liberal. I believe in giving a square deal to every one. Sit down and fire away. Hem!”

So I sat and gave a candid analysis of my

Mr. Allingham

economic condition and habits and interests and prospects while Mr. Allingham commented from time to time with an impatient "Ha!" or "Hem!" As I proceeded he seemed to listen with a growing irritation and began to glance at the door and twirl his mustache with a gesture of inimical fretfulness. But I kept on to the end. I felt my heart sinking and my voice growing weaker, but I forced myself on. At last the ordeal was over.

"My dear young man," said Mr. Allingham, shaking his head, "it's just as I thought. The whole thing is preposterous. Hem! Preposterous! By your own confession you are unable to earn sufficient to support yourself—much less a wife. Why, you couldn't keep a bee in New York on less than five thousand a year—not a bee, sir."

Mr. Allingham flung his arms out in one of his oratorical gestures with the air of a man who has dismissed a delicate subject rather neatly, and I thought ruefully that I was probably one of the few men in the metropolis who could tell him, after a little calculation, exactly how many bees one could keep for five thousand a year.

“Mr. Hobby”

“I never had Rose to work for before,” I expostulated. “I’ve never cared much about money. But now I shall turn over a new leaf. I shall go after five thousand a year.”

“Ha!” cried Mr. Allingham testily. “You won’t get it. Hopeless. You’re not a money-maker, young man. A dreamer. I recognized you at a glance. And the leopard can’t change his spots. I say, can’t change his spots. Why at your age I’d already carved out a place for myself and assured my future. My advice is, forget all about Rose. Impossible for you, eh? Just look at it philosophically.” He waved his hand toward the door and stood up.

“But suppose I do succeed in getting five thousand a year,” I appealed.

“Hem!” said Mr. Allingham, taking a step forward. “If you do, I say, *if* you do, then come in and we can talk business. Until then —” Another wave of the hand.

“But, Mr. Allingham—”

“Well, come in in a year and tell me how you’re doing. We’ll have a talk. I want to be fair but—hem—feelings of a father.”

“A year!” I gasped.

“Well, six months then. Of course there’s

Mr. Allingham

not much hope for you. My little Rosie has scores of suitors—scores. One of our wealthiest young millionaires is greatly interested. Fascinating chap. You'd best take my advice and forget her." All the time he was forcing me toward the door.

"I can't forget her," I said. "Meanwhile, may I call on her?"

"Impossible," he declared. "Under the circumstances, decidedly, no. I trust to your honor not to see or communicate with her. It would be—hem!—very improper. I hope you understand me. Good day, young man, good day."

He had fairly pushed me over the threshold. His hand described a graceful, deprecatory gesture and then the door closed firmly and I stared again at the legend "Private."

I did not know at the time that Mr. Allingham was on the verge of bankruptcy and trusted to the alliance with Manor to reestablish himself. As I strode out of the store—past the clerk at the table who was still sniffing over the little cups—and pushed my way aimlessly and unseeingly through the streets, I felt dazed and confused, like one who has been

"Mr. Hobby"

roughly jostled in a crowd. The interview had been so lamentably different from what I had pictured. The man was so different.

Life was a much more complicated affair than I had realized. Falling in love was a matter, not of pastoral simplicity, but of infinite civilized considerations.

My first problem was to secure that essential income of five thousand a year.

Well, I must give up my bugs. There was no money in bugs and I must devote myself to building up a practice. I dreaded the prospect, but the thing must be done. Beyond a vague idea of "meeting people" I had no notion how to build up a practice. But I must be keen and capable. I enviously glanced into the faces of keen-faced young men I passed. They appeared to know what they were about. They probably were getting on. But I could not devise a single practical plan. The only scheme that came into my head had no relation to the law whatever. It was an idea for an entomological article and came in the form of a title: "The Little Mothers with the Swords." I could do it in odd moments and a popular magazine might pay me as much as \$200. But I

Mr. Allingham

needed five thousand a year. And cudgel my brains as I would, it seemed as unattainable as the income of a Rockefeller. "Dolt!" I cried, striking my empty forehead. "Ninny!" I became conscious that passersby were staring at me curiously. . . .

From a long, somber reverie I was awakened suddenly by some one shouting "Hey!" To my astonishment I found myself far out on the footpath of Brooklyn Bridge. I had climbed up on the guard-rail and was leaning over precariously . . . or below, on the swirling river, fussy little tugs were dashing about among broad, deliberate ferry-boats and in midstream a slim, white yacht was sliding gracefully toward the Bay.

"Hey, you! Come down off'n there!"

A fat policeman was running toward me as rapidly as his bulk would permit. Before I could step down his hand was on my shoulder and he yanked me back roughly.

"What d' you think you 're tryin' to do? A Brodie? You beat it out of here or I 'll fling yer in the cooler!" he shouted, puffing.

"I hadn't the least idea—" I began.

"Aw, beat it! Beat it!"

“Mr. Hobby”

I “beat it,” conscious, amidst my humiliation that in one thing Mr. Allingham was right. I was a dreamer.

X

OPPORTUNITY RINGS MY TELEPHONE

ON my return I found J. Zinsheimer, that tortuous plugger, still brooding over his book, the image of patience and discretion. As I looked at him, I was seized with a whimsical idea.

"Johnny," I asked, "how can I earn five thousand a year?"

J. Zinsheimer looked up thoughtfully. "You're a smart man, Mr. Dulworthy," he said. "There's lots of men not nearly so smart as you who make more than that out of the law business. But they get more of a hustle on than you, Mr. Dulworthy. You've got to get a hustle on to make money."

"Johnny," I said, with the solemnity of one taking an oath, "I will get a hustle on."

J. Zinsheimer looked at me, a bit doubtfully it seemed, but suddenly his face cleared and he smiled.

“Mr. Hobby”

“Was you thinking of getting married, Mr. Dulworthy?” he asked.

“Well—yes,” I confessed, embarrassed.

“That was the lady yesterday?” pursued my office boy inexorably.

“That’s the lady I have in mind,” I admitted.

J. Zinsheimer breathed a great sigh.

“I’m awful glad, Mr. Dulworthy,” he declared warmly. “When I came in yesterday and seen—I mean, when I saw you, I didn’t know what to think. It wasn’t like you, having a lady here like that. But now I’m awful glad. She’s a fine lady, all right. I guess I know why you lost interest in the bugs, Mr. Dulworthy.”

My morals and my choice thus approved, I withdrew to the library. I wanted to get a hustle on. I burned to get a hustle on. But I was flatly puzzled over the means of finding something on which to try out my capabilities in the hustling line.

I was conscious that the telephone bell had rung and J. Zinsheimer was holding a long conversation over the wire, but my mind was too busy with speculations to give heed. Ah, if

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Opportunity would but give that fated knock upon my door!

J. Zinsheimer came rushing to me with a flush on his sallow cheeks.

"I got some new law business for us," he declared.

It appeared that the business was in connection with the bankruptcy of one Schwartz, a retail merchant on the East Side, who had mysteriously failed, owing some \$15,000 to the Bon Ton Dress Goods Company of Broadway. I. Ravelovsky was the Bon Ton Dress Goods Company and incidentally J. Zinsheimer's uncle, and, on the previous evening, when disturbing rumors of Schwartz's dissolution were floating about and Ravelovsky was morosely discussing the reports at a family council, J. Zinsheimer had orated on the theme of my "smartness."

"So you see," he declared triumphantly in conclusion, "we got something for a little now."

It was indeed my longed-for chance. Opportunity, like a modernized goddess, had rung my telephone bell—and I pledged myself not to drop the receiver. In my first flush of exalta-

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tion, I resolved to devote myself to the case with a zeal that must win me both money and prestige. Rose was a mascot. She had brought me good luck.

I went immediately with J. Zinsheimer to interview the tearful Ravelovsky. And after that I hunted up the attorney of another considerable creditor, and, with his coöperation, set about procuring a dependable trustee. That night I arrived at my boarding house late for dinner, exalted and somewhat astonished at my own promptness and efficiency. I consumed my pallid soup and lukewarm roast beef and potatoes with unusual appetite and even finished with gusto the inevitable dessert of stewed prunes.

My hall bedroom was too small to contain me that evening. I found it impossible to sit at my little table and devote my hours to studying a book on ignition systems. Instead I went roaming up Broadway, rejoicing in my high spirits and the clatter and crowds and lights. Every one appeared successful and happy and gay and I felt myself already on the road to success and happiness. I grudged the time I must spend on flying machines, for those two

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weekly afternoons would be pure waste. I watched immaculate young men, with an air of solicitous intimacy assisting from motor cars, in front of blazing theaters or hotels, girls that seemed beautiful, filmy creatures fresh from fairyland, and I longed for a day when I could emulate these gilded courtesies. The thought of Rose became so poignant that I could not resist jumping into a Madison Avenue car and riding up into the eighties, simply to look at the place where she lived.

I had never seen her father's house before. It was an old-fashioned brownstone, one of a row. One of the upper windows was lighted and I wondered if that were Rose's room. The shades were drawn. Presently, however, one of them was lifted and my heart beat a tattoo as I saw the figure of a woman. As she raised the sash and looked out, I saw she was a maid-servant. She began a communication by means of signals with the chauffeur of a car which stood at the curb near the door. I was disappointed, but I sympathized with the pair. I felt myself akin to all lovers. For a few minutes they signaled silently and then the shade was pulled down abruptly.

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A voluminous lady came out of the house and entered the car. Mr. Allingham, framed on the threshold, waved her adieu. She was Mrs. Van Amsted and at sight of her a cloud passed across my happiness. I watched her car whirl off toward Fifth Avenue and then, considerably sobered, I went home.

XI

I AM INTERVIEWED BY A SWELL LADY AND BY A FAT LADY

“**A** LADY to see you, Mr. Dulworthy.”

I was seated in a coatless state in my library, brushing up my knowledge of the bankruptcy laws, when J. Zinsheimer made this announcement.

“A lady!” I exclaimed. “Did she give her name?”

“No,” said J. Zinsheimer. “But she’s a swell lady, Mr. Dulworthy. She has on a fine dress, all right.”

I was puzzled. I didn’t know any “swell ladies.”

“It might be some new business for us,” hazarded J. Zinsheimer optimistically.

Fervently hoping it would not be a divorce case, I hastily donned my coat and, stepping into my private office, bade J. Zinsheimer admit

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the visitor. But before he obeyed, J. Zinsheimer, with a few deft sweeps of his coat sleeve, obliterated the dust which always covered my desk. Then he looked with disapproval upon its bare surface. I watched him in astonishment while he pulled a heap of old letters from a file and scattered them in careless order over the desk. Then he dashed into the library and returned with two fat volumes which he also bestowed upon the desk and to these he added an old brief.

“That looks more like a hustle,” he whispered.

It did. My desk always wore an atmosphere of desertion and neglect. It looked as briskly business-like as an old plow clover-grown in a fallow field. But J. Zinsheimer had transformed it deftly into the working place of a practitioner who had his hands full of legal business. I saw the point. J. Zinsheimer was determined that my visitor should get the impression of an active young attorney vigorously attacking a great desk-load of work.

I sat at the desk, opened one of the big law volumes and glared at it with an exaggerated

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frown, while J. Zinsheimer nodded and smiled at me from the doorway.

As the lady entered, with a great rustle of silk, I rose ceremoniously. I was amazed to behold Mrs. Van Amsted.

The lady's lips were apparently frozen together and altogether unresponsive to the welcoming smile I managed to summon, and her manner of uttering my name made me feel like an Eskimo. I asked her to be seated. She sank into a chair, and, raising her lorgnon, regarded me frigidly.

"I have been amazed, Mr. Dulworthy," she said, at the conclusion of her inspection, "to learn that you aspire to marry my niece, Miss Allingham. I feel a keen responsibility in the matter, not only because my niece is motherless and I am her mother's sister, but also because you originally met my niece, though without my sanction and in a highly improper manner, upon my grounds. I have therefore come to tell you that your pretensions are quite impossible—quite."

"My dear lady—" I began.

"My niece," she swept on heedlessly, "is accustomed to a certain standard of living which

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I learn you are wholly unable to attain to. Your income, according to my information, is farcical."

"It is my intention, Mrs. Van—"

"An extremely undesirable resort is said to be paved with good intentions. If you really loved my niece you would realize immediately that the life of a girl like her would be a veritable inferno if she were reduced to poverty. This would be your first consideration. You intend, I suppose, to secure an income. But you habitually squander the time you should be devoting to your profession to trespassing upon private property in a passionate hunt for vermin."

I laughed. I could not help it, she was so intolerably serious. "Pardon me. I suppose you think me a bit mad?" I said.

"Personally I have little doubt of it," declared Mrs. Van Amsted, setting down her lorgnon which she had raised to observe my mirth. "But I am willing, for the present, to waive that point. I am willing to believe you mentally capable of seeing reason. Miss Altingham has an assured future, a happy future. She is to be married to a healthy, competent

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young man of conspicuous prosperity. He will be able to give her everything that a woman can desire. Mr. Allingham and myself are determined that this brilliant prospect shall not be interfered with. We forbid you to pay any attentions to Miss Allingham or meddle with her in any way. Do I make myself plain?"

"Mr. Allingham has given me permission to take up the matter with him again at the end of six months," I said. "Meanwhile I shall make no pledges not to see his daughter."

"I see it is useless to waste words on you, sir," said Mrs. Van Amsted, rising with a frown. "I shall, if necessary, take legal measure to keep you from pestering my niece. Let me assure you, you shall never marry her. Good day."

She swept out of the office with great dignity, leaving a faint scent of powder behind.

The interview left me greatly perturbed. I had no standing as a suitor for Rose Allingham's hand. I was profoundly ignorant of Rose Allingham's sentiments toward me. For all I knew, she might merely regard me as a source of amusement—if she regarded me at all. And, as her father had forbidden me the

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house and this powerful aunt had announced herself violently opposed to me, my case was not exactly hopeful.

And yet the very fact of this extraordinary opposition to me, evidenced in Mrs. Van Amstel's visit, was a basis of hope. If I were an entirely negligible person, Mrs. Van Amstel would have ignored me. Her visit could only be explained by a suspicion that Rose looked upon me with some favor. I consoled myself with this delicious thought. In some way I had seriously disturbed the family circle which presumably had been held the previous evening.

Li Zinshei never came into the inner room and hovered about, under the pretext of arranging some papers, with questionings eyes.

"Did the lady bring any news from Mr. Dulworthay?" he finally asked.

My curt "No" sent him quickly back to his table. But in a few moments he was again musing.

"Another lady?"

"What?" I cried.

"This is a fat one—wful fat," he explained, with a jocular air, as though with

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is becoming a connoisseur on ladies. "She called me 'My dear.' "

He handed me a card on which was inscribed "Miss Gertrude Allingham."

"Another aunt!" I thought with a groan.

"I suppose I am to withstand a siege of the whole family."

Bracing myself for the attack, I bade J. Zinner show the lady in.

"How I am not intruding," said Miss Allingham, hesitating in the doorway, "but I wanted irresistibly to see you—because you care about Rose."

She was an elephantine woman. I was amazed, when I offered her a chair, to see her walk so lightly and briskly toward it. It seemed amazing that such a huge person could walk at all. As she sat down I was further astonished at a glimpse of her small and slender feet. What a stomach she had! It was like a small mountain, and her breast looked as if it could nourish all the babies in the world. The old woman who lived in a shoe would have envied it. I glanced at her great body and then at those utterly inadequate feet peeping out from under the voluminous curtains of her

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skirt. They were the feet of a slim girl. And down over her neck a cluster of chins lay like a bunch of grapes!

But the incubus of flesh had not spoiled her face. The features were clear and fine and she wore that tender, sympathetic expression that can only be described as maternal, so often to be noted in the faces of old maids. Whenever I come face to face with one of these maternal spinsters I am always reminded that we have made a Virgin the type of the universal mother.

I liked the air of kindness about Miss Allingham. She was not at all like Mrs. Van Amsted. But I did not let this prepossession throw me off my guard. This was simply a new and more subtle form of assault and I determined to let the invader see that my defenses were manned for the onset.

“I am glad to see you, Miss Allingham,” I said, “but I warn you fairly that if you have come to persuade me to forget your niece, your mission is useless.”

“What,” asked the lady, in apparent astonishment, “makes you think that is my purpose?”

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"As you probably know," I said, "Mrs. Van Amsted has just been here. Her interview was not successful."

"I knew she was coming," she said. And then, after a minute, she smiled suddenly and added: "I suppose Mrs. Van Amsted was rather—trying."

"Yes," I assented, still on my guard.

Miss Allingham smiled at me again and searched my face with her keen gray eyes. "I do not come to you with a sword—or a hatpin," she said gently, "but simply, I confess, inspired by considerable feminine curiosity, and, also, I insist, without harsh intentions or ill will. You have been discussed before the judgment seat of the family, and it seemed to me that most of the testimony against you was a bit prejudiced. So I wanted to find out for myself what sort of monster you might be. Of course Rose must choose for herself. I would not attempt to influence her for any man. But if you convince me you are a true man, I can perhaps help to make the family play fair."

Somehow I could not doubt Miss Allingham's sincerity. Her sympathy was so unexpected and in such contrast to the hostility I had met,

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that I nearly made a fool of myself with tears. But I gulped them back.

Then I told her all about myself, from the beginning, omitting nothing that would bear on my relations with Rose. Miss Allingham listened attentively and occasionally a smile lingered furtively about her lips and her eyes sparkled with a twinkle reminiscent of Rose. My uncle's will amused her immensely.

While we were talking, I could see that Miss Allingham was observing me closely and making mental notes of me. And all the time I was hoping that I measured up to the requisite standard. Never before had I desired so ardently to make a good impression. And it seemed to me, as we went on, that Miss Allingham was going to like me.

We had a long, intimate chat and she gave me some maternal advice.

“You must make some money, dear boy,” she admonished me. “You can't come to Rose, or to any girl, with empty hands. It's the way of this most unromantic world.”

“I shall try,” I said, “if it is in me.”

“I am sure it is,” she said, as she rose to leave.

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She held out both her hands and looked at me tenderly, and, before I realized it, I had kissed her on the cheek. She blushed very prettily.

"I, alas, am an old maid," she said. And then she added roguishly: "I wonder if Rose suspects what a flirt you are."

Laughing and blushing, she left the office with a quick step and an alert carriage marvelous in so cumbrous a person.

Her visit relieved me of some of my worry about the machinations of Mrs. Van Amsted. I felt that I had a friend at court, and I was greatly cheered in that knowledge.

XII

HOW I GOT A HUSTLE ON

SPURRED in my mighty resolve to "get a hustle on," I plunged into the law with a vigor and seriousness I had not displayed since the praying mantis distracted me. I studied the Schwartz case from every angle and delved deep into bankruptcy precedence. Mrs. Nolford's business I conducted at the top notch of efficiency. Each night the light in my hall bedroom burned late as I sat plugging. And I went no more afield after bugs.

Of course two afternoons a week were devoted to flying. At that art I was getting to be expert, and Mr. Timmins was loud in encomiums.

"You ought to keep this up," he said. "It 's a great game. We pioneers will be in big—those of us who don't get smashed up."

He appeared constantly astounded at my lack of enthusiasm about flying.

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Another note from Rose Allingham served to bind me more closely to my legal tasks. She wrote:

It appears that I committed an awful solecism in visiting your office, and a dreadful indiscretion in asking you to call. Doing only proper and discreet things is very stupid and tedious. So I fear I shall never be a lady at heart. At least I hope I never shall.

I had not suspected before this that I could not play with any one I wanted to play with. And you seemed a particularly harmless playmate. But I'm beginning to think you must be an ogre. Father's in a tantrum about me and Aunt Van's in a tantrum. But Aunt Gertrude is a dear.

I hoped you would come anyway. But I suppose some one told you not to. I think it's odious!

A little bug of an idea has been buzzing in my head. It's probably a very foolish idea, but I've been getting quite excited over it. What do you think of preparing a book about the bugs in the ordinary man's garden, not principally a *practical* book showing what insects are valuable and what are mere parasites, but to reveal to every one a new little world at his very back door? If such a volume were done with imagination and humor, every person who has a garden would buy it and you could use the proceeds to buy a frock cutaway for bugging excursions, in place of your present funeral coat which is out-of-date. And as your royalties mounted up, you could get some Fifth Avenue tailor to make you a splendid suit of dress clothes for hunting fireflies and will-o'-the-wisps after six o'clock. Is n't that a grand little idea?

We leave to-morrow for Merryport, where father has a

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tiny cottage on the shore not far from poor Mr. Manor's palace. I suppose you will come up to the Bug Convention. At any rate, I have instructed Bobby to send you an invitation. And if you do attend and fail to break down family restrictions by hunting me out, I shall never again put my faith in a bug man.

As I read this I had a little twinge of jealousy over the intimate proprietorship of her reference to young Manor. But her idea was splendid. How wonderful she was! And what a dolt I was not to have thought of that book before.

I spent nearly a whole night writing answers to her letter and tearing them up, as too formal or too intimate. And when I finally sealed a brief, colorless little note, which pledged me to see her in Merryport, my 78-cent alarm clock pointed to four o'clock and a bleak dawn was stealing over my back-yard landscape. There had been no legal work that night.

I immediately decided to resume my bug expeditions for material for my garden book. Probably because the idea came from Rose, I attacked the work with enthusiasm and mapped out with remarkable speed a working plan. This skeleton of the work I submitted to a publisher.

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"It would make rather an unusual work," he said, with an air of preoccupation. "Some unusual books sell, and others do not. I trust, when you have completed it, you will let us see the manuscript."

As I left, I reflected that I could scarcely expect more. Even his polite and rather frigid interest could not dampen my ardor.

J. Zinsheimer observed my burst of industry during these few days, with enthusiasm. But he began to display an inquisitiveness about my private affairs that puzzled me. Hitherto he had accepted me passively, without questioning, but now each morning he put me through a catechism about my personal activities and the state of my health. I always answered him courteously. If it pleased him to probe my personal habits, I was determined to humor him. I could not afford to affront J. Zinsheimer. But I wondered. The only explanation I could think of was that he regarded himself as a sort of trainer whose duty it was to keep me in the pink of condition for the great contest—the examination of Schwartz.

Another curious thing about him was a sudden epistolary activity. Time and again I

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would find him writing letters, or a continuation of the same letter. When discovered at his task he would hastily hide his paper in the table drawer and pretend to be studying a law book on bankruptcy. Once I asked him playfully if he was writing a novel, but he merely flushed slightly without replying. I figured that he was probably earning a little money surreptitiously by these literary labors, and I did not grudge him the time he took, but I wished he would be more frank with me about it.

An office boy who was avariciously inquisitive about his boss's private affairs and inscrutably secret about his own was something of an oddity. It never occurred to me that he might be spying upon me for the benefit of some third person. . . .

I have said that I plunged into my legal tasks with vigor. But in spite of the fact that I felt the case to be the crucial point in my legal career, my interest soon began to flag.

In the first place, I. Ravelovsky was an odious person. He was a sort of pop-eyed spider, all tentacles and paunch and the several score blear-eyed, anemic working women, huddled in

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his rickety, odorous, ill-ventilated sweatshop loft reminded me of helpless flies whose blood he was sucking. He was such a habitual liar that I had great difficulty in getting at the facts in the case. And after each interview with him I would be seized with a desire to blow him up with a bomb and I would stride back to my office taking long breaths to drive the stench of his den out of my lungs and fervently hoping that Schwartz would get away with his spoils. This, I concede, was scarcely the proper attitude for a paid attorney. . . . I remember one day when one of his flies, a pale strip of a girl, had spoiled, through haste or carelessness, a small piece of goods, how he flew at her with a volley of coarse oaths one would not use to a beast. The picture of him leaning over her table, his bloated face knotted horribly with rage, his bloated fist menacing the helpless, shrinking child whose hollow black eyes stared up at him piteously, is still vivid to me. The damage done might have amounted to thirty cents. . . .

As for Schwartz, he was evidently a most elusive person. At least his assets eluded me. From the rate at which Schwartz had been ~~pay~~-

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ing “dress goods” before the failure, one would naturally expect to find his dingy shop bursting with articles of apparel. But it was practically empty—stripped bare. And he kept no books. Schwartz had obviously converted his stock into cash, but the how and where of the transactions covering this conversion was veiled in impenetrable mystery. I knew some of the tricks of fraudulent bankruptcy. A common one was for the bankrupt, on the eve of his failure, to turn over the profits of his spoils to his wife (or his sisters, or his cousins, or his aunts) who would dispose of the money in a real estate investment or a savings bank deposit. But so far as we could learn, none of Schwartz’s relatives had obtained any sudden accessions of wealth. The bankrupt’s assets had vanished into thin air, and as the days went by all our efforts to get trace of them came to nothing. Without some clue to them to use as a lever in the approaching examination, I feared that proceeding would prove a farce. We would have no case.

In the search for the missing assets J. Zinshimer was indefatigable. I wished I could work up a fraction of his perseverance and

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ardor. He prowled about on the East Side on detective expeditions until I felt impelled to stand him a new pair of shoes. He devoured books on bankruptcy with an astounding voracity. One day I thought I had caught him diverting himself with a novel. But the book proved to be *Sherlock Holmes*!

Amidst his many activities J. Zinsheimer still found time to put out his tentacles for further business. This time his prey was a certain Solomon Hammel, who manufactured "Pearlie" corsets and had put his trust in a large East Side jobbing house, to the extent of selling them a big consignment on a note which was now overdue. Mr. Hammel, however, was coy with J. Zinsheimer. He wanted to try all his powers of persuasion with the jobbing house before entering into a litigation with its attendant fees.

There was considerable delay in bringing Schwartz up for examination. The date finally set was two days before the opening of the Congress. Meanwhile we had found no clue to Schwartz's spoils and my distaste for the whole affair had grown to loathing. My only solace was my garden book on which I worked passion-

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ately. I dreaded the pending examination as a lazy school-boy dreads a quiz.

The referee before whom it was scheduled was a kindly, scholarly old gentleman. But he notoriously detested hearings and there was no prospect that he would preside in person. I knew that the proceedings would be held before his clerk, Miss Trimple, a square-jawed woman of indeterminate age with a fund of biting sarcasm which she delighted to lavish upon timid young attorneys. I knew I would be an ideal mark for her tongue. I knew I would be shy and speechless before her and probably bungle what I had in the way of a case. I feared the young woman. And I hated the examination.

The examination was set for a Tuesday. On the preceding Saturday I went to my office in a most disconsolate frame of mind. To my astonishment, J. Zinsheimer had not arrived. The boy had always been a marvel of punctuality. He invariably entered the office just as the clock was striking nine. So his unaccountable absence worried me. I feared he might be ill or was out securing a better position. Either thing would be a catastrophe. Without J. Zinsheimer I did not see how I could get through

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Tuesday's examination. I began to realize how dependent on him I had become.

I was a prey to gloomy thoughts until noon, when J. Zinsheimer walked in with an air of suppressed excitement.

"I'm sorry I was late, Mr. Dulworthy," he said. "I want you to go to a ball with me tomorrow night."

"A ball!" I gasped. "Sunday night!"

"It's a swell ball all right," said J. Zinsheimer, and emitted a few explanatory nasal words that appeared to be all consonants. "That means the Society of Friendly Ladies," he said. "It's to be at Tammany Hall."

"But I never go to balls," I protested.

"It's good to be a little social once in a while, Mr. Dulworthy," pleaded J. Zinsheimer, with the suspicion of a twinkle in his eye.

I stared at him amazedly. It occurred to me that he might be mad.

"I think I got a big surprise for you, Mr. Dulworthy," pursued J. Zinsheimer. "I wouldn't ask it, if I didn't think it would pay. You won't have to stay very long."

"But why do you want me to go?" I asked.

"Please let me have it a secret," he pleaded.

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“You just trust me and come, Mr. Dulworthy. I guess there 's some big business in it for us.”

I made a few futile protests, but J. Zinsheimer was as persistent as a fever. He would neither lift the veil of mystery nor permit me to escape. So finally I gave him a reluctant consent.

XIII

J. ZINSHEIMER HOLMES: THE ADVENTURE OF THE EAST SIDE BALL

THOUGH I was brought up in a strict church-going family, I confess that I have fallen out of the habit of attending religious services. Curiously enough, since the occasion when I beheld the praying mantis, I had ceased to join in the Sabbatical custom of congregational prayers. My Sundays I usually spent exploring the woods and fields about New York. Concerning these excursions I never had any conscientious qualms. But as I sat in my room waiting for J. Zinsheimer to take me to that Sunday evening ball, I was troubled with a sense of impending blasphemy. My unaccustomed evening clothes cried of it. They seemed hopelessly profane. I had never hitherto attended a Sunday evening social affair and I found that the irreverence of the thing vexed my New England conscience not a little.

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I rather envied J. Zinsheimer who had no traditions to mar his enjoyment. He arrived resplendent in evening clothes somewhat too large for him. He surveyed my garments, which were somewhat too small, with discreet approval.

I recall a great room brilliantly lighted and decorated with a profusion of flowers and greens. It was a-swarm with handsome young girls with brilliant carmine complexions, bediamonded dowagers of astounding acreage, pale, keen-eyed young cavaliers and pouch-eyed older men whose chests had been far outstripped by the pendant paunches of prosperity. Everywhere jewels glittered, on the throats and bosoms of women, in their hair, and even upon their shoe-tips, and, in some cases, in their teeth. And upon almost every countenance protruded the promontorial nose of the East Side.

In this assemblage J. Zinsheimer was a veritable Beau Brummel. He conversed easily with ponderous, glittering ladies whose mere physical splendor would have reduced me to speechlessness. He stormed group after group of pretty girls and sallies of laughter and warm glances rewarded his quips and jests. He

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danced, too, with wonderful grace and spirit. I marveled at him. I began to realize that my office boy was a wonderfully versatile young man.

It was no weather for a ball. The place was hot and close. The backs of ample dowagers showed streaks of perspiration and I began to speculate uncomfortably as to the length of time my collar would endure. But J. Zinsheimer, amid his manifold activities, remained cool and immaculate. A suspicion crossed my mind that the young man had brought me merely to exhibit his social prowess.

He introduced me to some of the pretty girls. I was not a dancing man, but men were a minority and the girls seemed glad to chat with me. They were remarkably vivacious. Their voices were considerably louder than was the habit in Higgsville society and betrayed a pronounced nasal twang.

A row of gaudily decorated boxes was reserved for the ladies who were officers and patrons of the society. These dames did not disguise the fact that they were exceedingly well nourished. They apparently gloried in it. Their fleshy expanses of back and breast and

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shoulder would have inspired with a somewhat similar delight the soul of Peter Paul Rubens or a cannibal chef. And their jewels! Many a princess might have envied that display of gems. A sneak thief would have swooned with emotion at the sight.

Only one of the boxes was unoccupied. I noticed J. Zinsheimer glance toward this nervously from time to time. He would leave a group of laughing girls to whisper with some inconspicuous person in regard to that empty box.

Finally there was a bustle of new arrivals. J. Zinsheimer eyed them keenly. There was more mysterious whispering, and then he came forward and lured me away from a handsome siren who was telling me a score of charming reasons why she should be permitted to vote.

J. Zinsheimer called my attention to a person who was entering the unoccupied box.

I beheld a lady with a figure like an apple dumpling, a harsh, fleshy, hawk-nosed countenance, and several feet of projecting false hair. But as soon as she removed her cloak this impression faded. I blinked at her wonderingly, for she was all ablaze with gems. They were

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stuck in her hair, they hung from her ears, they were looped about her neck in great ropes and spanned her hippopotamus stomach with a glittering belt of armor. She shone, she coruscated, she blazed. She was a veritable conflagration of precious stones. All the wealth of Ormus and of Ind had apparently been lavished on her unprepossessing body. Beside the flagrant vulgarity of her display, the adjoining dowagers were inconspicuous, even prudishly conservative.

"Who is she?" I asked awesomely.

"She's the reason I asked you to come, Mr. Dulworthy," said J. Zinsheimer. "She's Schwartz's wife."

He took out a program and pointed to her name among the list of vice-presidents.

"Well?" I said.

"She and Schwartz bought 'em two weeks before the failure off a jeweler named Rubin on Maiden Lane," said J. Zinsheimer. "I can get a copy of the bills."

I looked at the lady again. She sat with an expression of conscious satisfaction at the admiration she attracted. And at every movement of her stumpy frame hundreds of gems

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blazed and shone. They were Schwartz's vanished assets.

J. Zinsheimer, I realized, had not been reading *Sherlock Holmes* for nothing.

I did not have the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Schwartz. Her husband was not present. Whether he had permitted her to come and display her jewels or whether an overwhelming vanity had driven her to the place in spite of his prohibition, I never learned. But it was a rash ostentation. Schwartz was trapped.

Shortly after the advent of Mrs. Schwartz I bade J. Zinsheimer a grateful good night. As I passed out of the door he swung into a waltz with the prettiest girl in the room.

XIV

HOW A NEW INFATUATION BLOTTED OUT MY DUTY TO ROSE

I HAVE often envied the heroes of romantic novels, the broad-shouldered, strong-featured young men who look too sophisticated to be young Greek gods and can only be compared, physically, to the splendid creatures in the advertisements for cheap clothing. But I do not covet their physique so much as their infallible ability to grasp opportunities, overcome difficulties and win serenely to their goal. I can not imagine such a hero being afraid of Miss Trimple. He would undoubtedly brush aside Miss Trimple. If she proved obstreperous he would annihilate Miss Trimple. But I stood in mortal fear of Miss Trimple. The thought of her sarcasm robbed me of all the joy of J. Zinsheimer's coup.

I saw on Monday the Maiden Lane jeweler who sold the gems to Schwartz. He evidently

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made the case complete, though up to Tuesday morning Mrs. Schwartz had eluded our subpoena server and the jewels were still undiscovered. Any lawyer would have been filled with the joy of battle at this stage of the proceedings. But I felt not even a titillation. All my energy was absorbed just then in my garden book. And though my future might depend on the outcome of the Schwartz examination, I wished Schwartz had never been born.

If we concluded the case I had planned to leave on Tuesday night for Plum Island. The Entomological Congress was to open Thursday. My aunt and Martha were already on the island.

J. Zinsheimer greeted me Tuesday with the information that he had at last landed the reluctant Hammel and our second case.

“I fixed him last night,” said my office boy. “We’ll get that litigation now all right, Mr. Dulworthy. Hammel will be in to-morrow and we’ll have it started by the time you get back. I guess we’re getting a practice now.”

I thanked J. Zinsheimer with an attempt at enthusiasm and glanced at a letter from Mrs. Nolford, which proved to be a request for some

A New Infatuation

information bearing on a parcel of real estate she contemplated purchasing. The necessary data were obtainable in the library at the City Hall. I could easily have permitted J. Zinsheimer to get the facts after my departure, but largely because the atmosphere of my office seemed so intolerable that morning, I decided to run over to the City Hall before the Schwartz case came on and look them up myself. The case was scheduled for 10:30 o'clock.

"Please don't forget and be late," admonished J. Zinsheimer as I left him. He was obviously nervous about letting me out of his sight.

"I'll be on time, Johnny," I promised, and walked out innocently to my downfall.

The library in the City Hall was at the time of my narrative a musty chamber containing aldermanic and departmental records and statutory volumes. It was in charge of two rickety ancients who slumbered in their chairs throughout the day. They were habited in a survival of a sort of military uniform and one of them, in a moment of wakeful garrulity, had confided to me that they were both veterans. He had intimated that they were veterans of the Civil War, but it was difficult to believe that

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creatures so mummified and antique had been sufficiently active to participate in a contest of such comparative modernity. It was more reasonable to suppose that they had served at Thermopylae or the war of the Seven against Thebes.

They were alone in the library when I arrived that morning, each seated before a window with his coat off, sunk in sleep.

I stamped about and coughed loudly without interrupting their impenetrable slumber. Finally I shook one of them by the shoulder until he grunted at me interrogatively. I cried in his ear the records I wished to inspect, and, after much fumbling he produced a bunch of keys which he dropped into my hands and made a gesture of dismissal. Then he apparently went to sleep again. During this time he had not noticeably opened his eyes.

The records were in locked cases. I rummaged about with the keys, seeking for a time in vain for the particular volumes I wished. At last, as I was about abandoning hope, I discovered them downstairs, in a sepulchral cellar chamber, divided by bookshelves into corridors, in which the dust of ages had settled. Just be-

A New Infatuation

fore my discovery, I had heard a bell toll 10 o'clock, but I calculated I could get my data and reach the referee's office not more than ten minutes late.

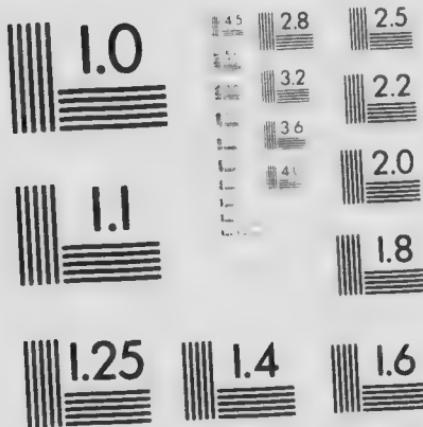
Clearing a place for myself on a dusty window seat, I sat on an old newspaper with the books and began my perusal, hastily taking notes the while. The place was quiet as a graveyard. I had never experienced such quiet in the midst of the city. Save the soft snoring of one of the ancients upstairs, there was no sound, and every time I turned a page it crackled with an intrusive boisterousness. Yet, toward the end of my researches, just as I was beginning to wonder lest I had overstayed my time, I became aware of a little, biting, rustling sound, almost imperceptible, somewhere there in the gloom. There was some life in the place. Finally my entomological curiosity was aroused. I set down my volume, listening, and then tiptoed into the twilight.

The next minute I was down on my knees in the dust of a dark corner, my heart pounding a wild tattoo against my ribs. I forgot my promise to J. Zinsheimer. I forgot Rose and the Schwartz case and my great legal oppor-



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“Mr. Hobby”

tunity. I only knew that there before me on the floor, feasting on some spilled white powder, was a new specimen—a whole community of new bugs!

Imagine a lively, long-legged water beetle of the variety familiarly known as the croton-bug, but unnaturally stout and ponderous in body, with flaming scarlet wing cases liberally speckled with dots of metallic black. Any housewife would be startled to find such an entomological phenomenon scampering about her kitchen sink, and as for me I was both startled and delighted. My eyes caught sight of a dusty tumbler. In an instant I had imprisoned about a dozen under that. Then, picking up a husky specimen in my pincers, I took him over to the window and began examining him rapturously with the aid of a magnifying glass. I always carried a small kit of entomological tools in my pocket.

I shall not bore the reader about the many remarkable anatomical points I discovered in the new bug. At first I thought him something entirely strange and undreamed of in the insect world—like a bug out of a fairy tale. But finally I got the idea that he might be a hybrid.



The new bug

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Possibly a croton-bug and a lady bug, finding themselves marooned in the cellar, decided to set up housekeeping together, and this colony was the result. Possibly—but there were infinite delightful possibilities! I plunged into an orgy of entrancing speculations. . . .

I was back again in the darkness, kneeling over the pile of spilled powder, when a voice behind me caused me to look up.

“What—eh—what?” said the voice.

The ancient who had given me the keys was standing there viewing my pose amazedly.

I indicated with a sweep of my hand the struggling insects. “A marvelous thing!” I exclaimed. “I believe I have discovered a somewhat baffling coleopterous insect which may possibly be classed among the *blattidae*.”

“Eh—insec’—bugs,” he ejaculated, blinking. “Mister Kelly do be sayin’ there ’ll be quare bugs here—quare.”

“It resembles in some respects the *Blatta germanica* and in others the *Vedolia Cardinalis*,” I explained, so rapt in the subject that I forgot the mental ineptitude of my hearer.

“Furriners!” he declared. “Dutch-like and Dago-like—not that I ’ve anything ag’in the

“Mr. Hobby”

Pope’s cardinals. That’s long names you give ‘em. Now to think it’s the way people go trap-sin’ all over the world lookin’ for wonderful things, when you can find ‘em just settin’—right here in the old Hall. Two of them there will have been in the ark belike—the same as elephants and tigers, I dunno?”

I admitted the possibility.

“Glory be!” said the ancient. “If you’ll write out them names on a bit of paper, I’ll give ‘em to the byes—the newspaper byes. They’ll be puttin’ in a piece about them now. Just to think it’s the way I was just steppin’ down for a bite of lunch—”

“Lunch!” I shouted. “What time is it?”

“Just strikin’ twelve,” said the old man.

With an exclamation, I rushed back to the window seat and snatched my pad. Then, to the mummy’s astonishment, I began imprisoning as many bugs as I could take captive in conical wisps of paper and stowing them in my pockets. The old man watched me for a minute and then went to the stairway.

“Kelly!” he called in a quavering treble. “Kelly! Here’s a gintleman says them bugs of yours is furrinners.”

A New Infatuation

By this time I had secured a dozen or more specimens and made for the stairway running.

"If you'll just write out their names—" began the attendant.

"Can't wait," I cried, brushing him aside.

I took the stairs two at a time, dodged through the swarming corridors, my hands held protectively over my pockets with their precious burden, and rushed through the streets toward the referee's office, a prey to horrible forebodings concerning the consequences of my forgetfulness.

XV

J. ZINSHEIMER HOLMES: THE ADVENTURE OF THE PUDGY LEG

THE shabby examination room in the referee's office was fairly well crowded and, as most of the persons present were of hippopotamian rather than classical human stature, the place was hot. On a bracket behind the heat, at the head of a long table, where Miss Trimple sat enthroned in state, perusing some papers, a little electric fan buzzed ineffectually. I noted at a glance that Miss Trimple and J. Zinsheimer were apparently the only cool individuals in the room. As for me, as soon as I crossed the threshold, I felt my collar begin to melt.

J. Zinsheimer was standing with his back to me. On the opposite side of the table, next to an elderly male stenographer and accompanied by two sharp-featured young East Side attorneys, sat Schwartz, his ponderous girth bulging

Adventure of the Pudgy Leg

from the chair and his round face like that of a monstrous Hebraic cherub with eczema. (It occurred to me on the instant that if we accept our Bible, all the cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels and officers and attendants in the Celestial City must be Jews, so that the anti-Semites will probably be very uncomfortable in Heaven.)

"Did you pay out a large sum of money about a fortnight before the failure?" J. Zinsheimer was asking.

"For vat?" asked Schwartz innocently.

"Answer the question," ordered J. Zinsheimer, and repeated it.

"For vat should I pay out, mister, when I have no moneys?" whined Schwartz.

"Answer yes or no," snapped Miss Trimple, looking up from her papers.

"No," said Schwartz, looking dubiously at his counsel.

"You did n't make a present to your wife?" pursued J. Zinsheimer.

"For vat should I make for my wife a present?" complained Schwartz.

"Yes or no," demanded J. Zinsheimer.

"S'elp me—" began Schwartz.

“Mr. Hobby”

“Answer!” came curtly from Miss Trimple.

“No, ma’am—yer Honor,” said Schwartz.

“You didn’t buy her any jewelry?” continued my office boy.

Schwartz mopped his face convulsively. “I can’t to remember all them things, mister,” he said.

“Don’t you remember going to Mr. Rubin’s jewelry store on Maiden Lane on July 2 and buying jewelry?”

“I ain’t got to remember.”

“Do you often buy jewelry?”

“No, sir.”

“And you can’t remember whether or not you bought \$23,000 worth of jewelry at Rubin’s store on July 2.”

“I’m a poor man, mister—” began Schwartz.

“Answer!” rasped Miss Trimple.

“I—I did n’t buy me yet no jewelry,” said Schwartz.

“That will do,” said J. Zinsheimer. “We may recall you later.”

I had by this time slipped into an inconspicuous seat in a corner of the room. J. Zinsheimer, it appeared to me, was conducting the examination more competently than I would be

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able to. I saw no reason for assuming charge, particularly as the sight of Miss Trimple filled me with terror. I had selected a seat shielded from Miss Trimple behind a particularly large and conspicuous-looking person. And from time to time I peered at her warily over his shoulder.

Schwartz, with an air of great relief, rose from the witness chair, and as he stood up his rubicund countenance suddenly turned a sickly yellow and he grasped the chair-back, panting, as he stared at a cadaverous, hawk-nosed person who was just entering from an anteroom. This was Rubin the jeweler.

"Mr. Rubin to the stand," said J. Zinsheimer.

Mr. Rubin proved to be what J. Zinsheimer subsequently described appreciatively as "a slick article." He recalled selling jewelry to a man on July 2. From his books he described the articles in detail and produced a list. The transaction was "on the cash." So far Mr. Rubin testified with pronounced and decision. But when it came to identifying his customer, Mr. Rubin's memory reluctantly failed. He could not recall the purchaser's name. J. Zinsheimer

"Mr. Hobby"

mer's utmost endeavors failed to refresh him in this detail. And he could not positively recognize Schwartz as the purchaser. "He had a big, red face on him," admitted Mr. Rubin, staring thoughtfully at Schwartz, but beyond that he refused to commit himself. It was evident that Mr. Rubin carried the point of loyalty to a customer to the threshold of perjury. One of his clerks, who succeeded him on the stand, maintained a similar reticence.

And then a deputy marshal entered with Mrs. Schwartz in tow.

The bankrupt's wife was uglier of face and in figure somewhat more like an apple dumpling than she had appeared at the ball. She was one of those persons who melt beneath a rising temperature, and as she sat heavily in the witness chair she streamed. I overheard portions of a whispered colloquy between the deputy and J. Zinsheimer, which established that no jewelry had been obtainable through Mrs. Schwartz, and then J. Zinsheimer started his examination.

The lady was coy. She refused to admit that she was Schwartz's wife. She pretended she did not understand. She quibbled and evaded. And finally Miss Trimple took a hand and

Adventure of the Pudgy Leg

threatened to fine her for contempt. At this the witness suddenly recalled that she was Mrs. Schwartz.

At this point a strange thing happened. Miss Trimple beamed encouragingly upon J. Zinsheimer. At least her granite features relaxed to a remarkable degree and she came as near the act of "beaming" as she could. I stared amazedly. Obviously J. Zinsheimer had won Miss Trimple. To me it was as if he had successfully raised violets at the North Pole.

During this preliminary passage of arms, Mrs. Schwartz's temperature had steadily risen, until I began to fear that a sudden explosion would demolish the witness. J. Zinsheimer politely suggested that she move a few feet back from the table, where she could catch a zephyr from the electric fan. Mrs. Schwartz, with a grunt, moved back, crossed her legs and glared at my office boy defiantly.

"How long are you married, Mrs. Schwartz?" asked J. Zinsheimer gently.

"Eighteen years."

"You are happy with your husband?"

"Such a *mashugah* question!" stammered the lady. "He's a good husbone, my man."

“Mr. Hobby”

“When you were first married he used to make you presents, once in a while?”

Miss Trimple quashed an objection by Schwartz's counsel and Mrs. Schwartz answered: “Sure!”

“Any jewelry—diamonds?”

“Sure.”

“But is n't it true he don't make you any presents these last few years?”

“No, it ain't,” snapped Mrs. Schwartz.

“He did n't give you any presents this year, Mrs. Schwartz, did he?”

“Su—” The witness bit the word off in the middle and closed her mouth with a snap.

“Did he?” repeated J. Zinsheimer.

“I can't to remember,” said the witness, breathing heavily.

I was watching J. Zinsheimer intently and suddenly I saw a light kindle in his eyes. He had been looking into Mrs. Schwartz's face, but now his glance fell and he stared, apparently at her right ankle, which was inadvertently exposed to view. I wondered why J. Zinsheimer should get excited over Mrs. Schwartz's ankle. It was not an exciting ankle. On the contrary it was excessively pudgy and

Adventure of the Pudgy Leg

clad in a white cotton stocking that clamored for the laundry. And just below the calf of her leg a huge and unsightly lump protruded, like a large tumor.

To my astonishment, J. Zinsheimer walked around the table, and stood with his back to it, patently in order the better to observe the ankle. Possibly, I thought, a pudgy ankle in an unclean stocking had an irresistible fascination for J. Zinsheimer. There are men who adore fat women, even unclean women. But I deplored both the manners and the taste of my office boy, who continued to fence with the witness, glancing furtively at the ankle from time to time.

He casually asked Mrs. Schwartz about various items in Rubin's cash sale. While questioning her he did not look at the list, but appeared to be intently sharpening a pencil with a diminutive pocket knife. J. Zinsheimer was most solicitous about the point of that pencil.

A man who sat next to me suddenly pawed the side of my coat with his hand. "Bug on your coat," he explained. I thanked him and glued my eyes again on J. Zinsheimer.

“Mr. Hobby”

“Did your husband give you any jewelry on or about July 2?” he asked.

“I can’t to remember.”

“Did n’t he give you a lot of jewelry?”

“I *dunt* know. It’s such a foolishness—all them questions to ask.”

J. Zinsheimer, with a final shave at his pencil, stuck it in his pocket and, still retaining his open knife, picked up a paper from the table.

“I hand you a list of articles sold by Mr. Rubin on July 2,” he said. “Did n’t your husband give them to you?”

Mrs. Schwartz stared at the list for several minutes.

“Did he give those articles to you?” J. Zinsheimer repeated.

“I ain’t never seen them things,” said Mrs. Schwartz finally.

J. Zinsheimer’s knife fell with a clatter to the floor at Mrs. Schwartz’s feet.

He knelt to pick it up. I saw him gash sharply with the knife at Mrs. Schwartz’s exposed stocking. The lady screamed and for an instant I thought the boy had gone mad and stabbed her in the leg. I caught a glimpse of white flesh through the torn hose, and several

Adventure of the Pudgy Leg

articles fell out with a clinking sound and lay sparkling and glittering on the floor. Mrs. Schwartz made a grab at them which nearly threw her headlong, but J. Zinsheimer was too quick for her. Snatching up the jewels, he placed them before Miss Trimple.

"I offer these in evidence," he said, a slight flush on his face.

In an instant the room was in an uproar. Schwartz began to curse volubly in Yiddish and his lawyer jumped up with a torrent of motions and objections. And in the midst of the tumult stood J. Zinsheimer serene and unsmiling.

When the din had somewhat subsided, my neighbor again clawed at my coat.

"Another bug," he said.

This time I looked down curiously and as I did so two of my precious specimens poked cautiously out of my pocket and sprinted for freedom. The man next to me stared with an odd mixture of wonder and disgust and I slapped my hand over my pocket in dismay. The evidences of my great find were getting away. I had probably imprisoned them too hastily.

It occurred to me that I need not stay any

“Mr. Hobby”

longer. Schwartz was exposed, and J. Zinsheimer was more than competent to handle the details of the case. I was at liberty to hasten back to my office and house safely the bugs I still retained. As I slipped quietly from the room, Mrs. Schwartz, protesting loudly, was being dragged into an adjoining chamber where Miss Trimple was to search her carefully for the remainder of the missing jewels. . . .

When J. Zinsheimer returned to the office I was hard at work dissecting some of my new specimens. My office boy looked at me in amazement.

“Well, I had a hunch you would n’t show up, Mr. Dulworthy,” he said. “Did you forget about Schwartz?”

“I found a new bug,” I explained apologetically.

J. Zinsheimer nodded solemnly but without reproach. “We found the jewels on Mrs. Schwartz,” he said. “I guess we ’ll make a good recovery for the creditors. Miss Trimple kept the jewels pending a decision. We can catch Schwartz and his wife for perjury, all right.”

“I appreciate your ‘We’ Johnny,” I re-

Adventure of the Pudgy Leg

plied. "But it seems I had precious little to do with it."

"I guess you could have done it better," said J. Zinsheimer. "I could n't do much with that Rubin."

"I was there when you cut Mrs. Schwartz's stocking," said I.

"Oh!" I claimed J. Zinsheimer and flushed slightly. Then he added, "Was you wanting any help with the bugs, Mr. Dulworthy?"

XVI

MR. SCARR

OBLIVIOUS of time, I worked blissfully over my specimens with microscope and scalpel, made little sketches and jotted down notes of essential variations from known types. I was astonished when J. Zinsheimer informed me it was half past four and inquired respectfully if I had had any lunch.

I had completely forgotten lunch. My faithful office boy urged the impropriety of neglecting one's appetite and I finally said I would go out for a sandwich. I wanted to get some alcohol anyway, of which my laboratory stood in need, and I suddenly recalled that the Merryport expedition had put me under the necessity of purchasing two shirts.

My various errands consumed nearly an hour. When I returned, J. Zinsheimer's face wore a look of impatience which I at first at-

Mr. Scarr

tributed to my prolonged absence. But he immediately corrected that misinterpretation.

"That Mr. Scarr was here, Mr. Dulworthy," he said.

Scarr was the editor of the *Entomological Journal*, a lanky, cadaverous person with a fugitive black eye, a whispering enunciation, a clerical habit of dress, and rubber-soled shoes. I had never been able to hold his eye or get him to commit himself on any proposition and I had a sneaking suspicion that he pocketed money due to contributors to the *Journal*. He was indeed the type of man one would expect to be a pickpocket or a burglar instead of the editor of a highly specialized scientific magazine. But, because he was the only person I knew with whom I could discuss my hobby intelligently, I had a vague fondness for him. To J. Zinsheimer, however, he was an object of hearty detestation.

"He said he wanted to arrange for some articles," said J. Zinsheimer morosely. "Could n't wait."

"Did you tell him about the new bug?" I asked.

“Mr. Hobby”

“Oh, he found that out all right, Mr. Dulworthy. First he said he’d wait inside and see how the specimens were coming on. And when he saw the new ones he got sort of excited and asked questions. I didn’t want to leave him alone in there but he sent me out for some matches.”

“I don’t believe the crown jewels are stolen,” I said.

J. Zinsheimer smiled, but immediately lapsed into seriousness. “I wouldn’t trust that fellow, Mr. Dulworthy,” he said seriously. “Excuse me if he’s a friend of yours, Mr. Dulworthy, but I think he’s a crook.”

“Johnny!” I exclaimed.

“Excuse me again, Mr. Dulworthy,” said J. Zinsheimer contritely. “When I got back with the matches he asked if you were going to that ento—that bug meeting off in the country and I said we were too busy in the office with law business.”

“But, Johnny, you know I’m going.”

“I wasn’t going to give him a line on you, Mr. Dulworthy,” said J. Zinsheimer doggedly. “He didn’t use those matches, Mr. Dulworthy. He didn’t want matches. He just wanted to

Mr. Scarr

get me out of the way so 's he could snoop around."

"You must n't talk like that about my visitors," I said sharply, as I strode into the library.

I hoped J. Zinsheimer had not offended Scarr. He was a valuable connection—my only connection in the entomological world. I decided to look him up at the Congress and apologize for my office boy's cavalier treatment.

My train left at 8 o'clock so that I had to gather my new specimens in a hurry. I intended to take them to the Congress, some of them alive, if I could manage it. There might be an opportunity to read a short paper. The bug was indeed amazing. I wanted to tell the whole world about it.

When I went out I had left twelve live specimens in a box. Now, to my astonishment, there were only eight. And I was also unable to find two of the most important pages of the notes I had taken. I made inquiries of J. Zinsheimer and he looked very grave.

"That Scarr!" he exclaimed. "I 'll bet when he sent me out for the matches he was thinking of a larceny on the bugs."

"Mr. Hobby"

I hunted nervously for the missing sheets.

"Are those bugs worth much, Mr. Dulworthy?" he asked.

"They're by far the most important find I ever made," I said.

J. Zinsheimer frowned thoughtfully. "Please, Mr. Dulworthy, don't let that fellow skin you," he said.

When I left the office I shamelessly refused to give J. Zinsheimer my address. I didn't wish to hear of any legal business during my absence.

XVII

THE TERRIBLE NIGHT

IN my entomological elation I scarcely any remorse over my the Schwartz case, but by the time the train, bound for Plum Island, come back to earth and I was inundated by the rising tide of shame over the entire dereliction. I had culpably neglected out of mere caprice. My great opportunity had, at the eleventh hour, thrown away. Had J. Zinsheim been less competent, the loss had been irretrievable. But his efficiency did not escape notice. Assuming he had saved the day, I was less branded as an untrustworthy amateur.

I felt that I had been unfaithful to my principles.

These thoughts assailed me painful thoughts. I was undressing in the sleeping car. The thoughts continued to assail me while I tossed in my hot and narrow bunk. I have always had difficulty in

"Mr. Hobby"

wooing sleep in a train and on this occasion my tumultuous self-accusations drove slumber far from my eyes. Finally I got up, pulled on my trousers, and went into the smoking apartment.

A sleepy porter provided me with cigarettes, which I seldom smoke, and newspapers, which I seldom read. But I felt the need of dissipation. In one of the newspapers was an article on the Entomological Congress. The article set forth that the visiting entomologists were receiving some preliminary entertainment at the hands of society folk at Merryport. Probably because of the patronage of the wealthy Mr. Manor, society had adopted entomology as its hobby of the summer. Dainty ladies whose pictures graced the social columns of the press were journeying afield to observe the humble lives of grasshoppers and beetles. This information amused me. I hoped it would raise the social status of entomologists in Mrs. van Amstel's mind. I wondered if she engaged in any of the society bug hunts.

My thoughts now turned to Rose. Her letter proved her interest in me. Perhaps she liked me. I would see her in Merryport—but how could I face her after proving myself a

The Terrible Night

renegade in the Schwartz case? I must make stern resolutions for the future. Perhaps Rose was really praying for my success! And how unworthy I was!

Glancing idly through the paper, the caption "Engagements," in a column of social gossip, caught my eye. I suppose my affection for Rose cast sentimental interest over this portion of "Engagements," which ordinarily I should have passed without notice. As I ran my eye down the column the following item came into my vision:

Though, owing to the recent death of Henry W. Manor, no formal announcement has yet been made, it has been learned from an authoritative source that Robert Kingston Manor, son of the late financier, is engaged to be married to Miss Rose Allingham—

I set the paper down with a gasp of dismay. Then I picked it up again and read on, though my hands trembled so that the type kept leaping about elusively:

... Miss Rose Allingham, the handsome and vivacious niece of Mrs. Van Amstel. Young Mr. Manor inherited all his father's fortune. He is already making a name for himself among the younger men in Wall Street. Miss Allingham's father, Richard Allingham, has been well-

“Mr. Hobby”

known in the coffee district for years. The young pair have been sweethearts from childhood and the engagement will be no surprise to their friends.

I crumpled the paper angrily in my hand and threw it, with a violent gesture, out of the window. Engaged to Manor! The blow came like thunder out of sunlight, shattering at once all my pigmy plans and ambitions. I felt absolutely stunned. My lighted cigarette, clutched awkwardly in my fingers, burned down and scorched my flesh badly before I realized that I should drop it. Amidst my sheer amazement a feeling of bitterness grew. Rose had intimated that she would not marry Manor. In a sense she had deceived me about Manor. Yes, I had been deceived.

The odd thing was that deep down in my heart I did not believe the story. There persisted in me a sub-conscious hope, based on the fallibility of newspapers. But this feeling was too absurd to be recognized. “You have lost her,” I told myself. “You must face the fact that you have lost her.” And the car wheels appeared to beat out an insistent refrain: “You have—lost her! You have—lost her!”

A man in a long dressing gown and bath slip-

The Terrible Night

pers shuffled into the compartment and flung himself into a chair in the corner opposite me. His presence annoyed me. I resented the intrusion upon my misery. Glancing up at him crossly, I saw he was Bobby Manor.

The young man did not wear the air of blissful ecstasy one would naturally expect in Rose's chosen suitor. In fact he looked rather despondent as he sat moodily puffing at a cigarette and staring at the floor. My tense scrutiny attracted his attention.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "Mr.—er—Mr.—"

To him I was so insignificant that he had forgotten my name.

"Dulworthy," I said.

"Of course. I've no memory for names. Always flunked history and geography. But I've a fine head for figures. If my acquaintances were convicts I'd have the right number every time. I suppose you're for the Bug Field day."

"Yes," I said.

"I've got a great bunch of highbrows," pursued Manor. "They'll revel in bug knowledge. Not a flea will escape. But I suppose I won't understand a word they say. Well, I'm glad

"Mr. Hobby"

you 're coming. Rose would n't let me forget you."

"I 've just been reading about your engagement to Miss Allingham," I said, trying to make my tone as casual as possible. "Let me congratulate you."

"Thanks," he said. "Thanks. Guess I must acknowledge the soft impeachment." His voice was rather cold. "Beastly night," he added. "So hot in my compartment, I felt like a chop on a grill."

Suddenly I realized that I could not sit there quietly talking to him. I loathed the sight of him—he was so confoundedly good-looking and prosperous and nonchalant. I hoped I would never see him again.

"I think I 'll go back to my oven and try for some sleep," I said, rising.

"Good night. See you at the Congress," returned Manor.

In my berth I tossed in sleepless torture until the porter called me to change cars for the Merryport branch.

XVIII

DISHONOR

MERRYPORt is one of the traditional fishing ports. In the old days its hardy mariners braved the terrors of the deep in all weathers in search of the humble cod. But Merryport's citizens no longer put out to sea, save to conduct parties of summer folk on pleasure excursions, and they no longer cast their nets upon the waters, but angle for the shekels of the urban visitors. Some have sold their patches of land to millionaires and live in a condition of comparative affluence and superlative otiosity. Others lure the summer boarder or cater to his wants with the milder forms of waterside activity, and a few, blessed with the artistic temperament, have assumed the vocation of being "characters."

I suppose in the days before Merryport became a vacation center, it consisted of a few score of rough, weather-worn shanties huddled

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on the shore and permeated with a mighty odor of fish. But this picturesque condition has succumbed to the encroachments of architecture. I found it a settlement of comfortable-looking boarding places and smart cottages, set in a crescent of beach. In the midst of it loomed the great, white, concrete hotel, in which the sessions of the Congress were to be held. And the odor of fish had been replaced by a pervasive scent of gasoline.

From Merryport a tubby steamboat caromed out among the islands scattered lavishly along the coast. This landed me at a place inhabited by bareheaded girls in sailor blouses and there I found a disdainful youth who rowed me across the intervening distance to Plum Island, an attractive oval of gray rock and blue gorse and bright green scrub pines, in the midst of which stood a little white house.

I found Aunt Abigail and Martha greatly excited over an old letter that had been forwarded from Judge Dilly. “The three months allotted to you in which to qualify for the legacy left you conditionally under the terms of the will of your brother, the late Ezekiel Dulworthy, are drawing to a close,” he wrote. “They expire

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on August 30. Let me remind you that you must have the sworn statements of at least two disinterested persons that you have fulfilled the terms of the will. I trust you will have all success in meeting the conditions."

I was certain Judge Dilly had fixed the qualification period at four months. Aunt Abigail was equally certain. I had a copy of the document, which Judge Dilly had given her, and now I consulted this. It said three months. It was then August 27 and we still had three days. As the aeroplane was due to arrive the next day with a mechanic to assemble it, there was little danger of a forfeit, save in the event of an accident or unusual weather conditions. But we were pretty close to the line. We had, of course, been going on the serene supposition that we were allowing a full month's margin.

I supposed Judge Dilly had made a mistake when he read the will. But both Aunt Abigail and Martha scented a malevolent purpose in the discrepancy. They were sure Judge Dilly wished Aunt Abigail to lose the furniture. And perhaps they were right. He was rather a hateful old man.

I was unable to match the annoyance of my

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aunt and Martha over Judge Dilly, and, I fear, in my condition of depression, I was not properly responsive to the efforts they had made for my comfort. I suppose they both felt rather lonely in their strange, insular existence and my arrival was extremely grateful to them. They insisted upon giving me the only room in the house with a fair view of the island-dotted sea. They had stocked the place with all my favorite preserves and dainties. Arrangements had been made for a motor boat to take me to and from Merryport for the sessions of the Congress, and they had even secured a sailing dory for my recreation. Sailing was one of the accomplishments I had acquired at college. Martha, somewhat to my astonishment, expressed a desire to learn the art. . . .

My aunt was rather melancholy. Not only had she left a beloved environment to emerge into the clash and clamor of a world she despised, in which hideous railroad trains were a necessary part, but she was about to be humiliated by undergoing the ridiculous ordeal of mounting in a flying machine. I do not think she looked forward with any fear to her hazardous aerial adventure; her feeling was one

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of bitterness. The absurdity of her position impressed her keenly. Martha told me that during the entire railroad journey from Higgsville my aunt knitted doggedly in a stony silence.

I realized that a sympathetic cheerfulness was demanded of me. But I felt about as cheerful as a Scotch mist in November. I craved to be alone, to thresh out in solitude my disillusion and despair. I did not want to talk with my aunt, and particularly not to Martha, who displayed a practical disposition to solve the cause of my poor spirits.

But it was impossible to escape from Martha. She appeared to fill the whole horizon. When she herself was not at my elbow, my aunt would be lauding her manifold domestic virtues, her capabilities and excellences. Martha, Aunt Abigail insisted, was the author of all the ans for my comfort. At luncheon we were refreshed with a superlative brew of tea and an incomparable cake, both, as my aunt proclaimed, the products of Martha's skill. The atmosphere vibrated with eulogies of Martha. It occurred to me that I had listened to a similar tune on my last visit to Higgsville.

As I sat on the porch with Aunt Abigail after

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lunch, I could hear Martha within the house, busied with some details of the housework, singing “Abide with me,” her favorite hymn, the droning of which was with her a sign of complete happiness. Aunt Abigail had not brought with her any hired help, so Martha, with the burden of the establishment on her hands, was in a state of perfect beatitude. I suppose Martha’s idea of Heaven is a sort of glorified housekeeping. I listened frowningly to her singing. The hymn invariably irritated me, for it was the symbol of internal upheaval and uncomfortable masculine outlawry at Higgsville—Martha’s Marseillaise of house-cleaning.

My aunt was vigorously knitting one of the blue worsted shawls for which she is famous. “I feel that Ezekiel played a nasty trick on me,” she said. “It was beastly, considering my age. I would go home and let the furniture rot in a museum if it were not for you.”

“I don’t want you to do anything unpleasant on my account,” I protested.

Aunt Abigail’s flying fingers stopped and she put her hand affectionately on my shoulder. “Dear laddie,” she said, “I want the furniture

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for a wedding present for you and Martha. It's for you two children to furnish your nest."

I felt myself flushing to the roots of my hair. In a flash I realized that Aunt Abigail must have no further misconception about Martha and me. I glanced timorously into her eyes, which glowed with a soft light.

"Well?" she interrogated gently.

"Please, Aunt Abigail, you mustn't do that," I stammered. "I—I don't wish to marry Martha."

Aunt Abigail snatched her hand from my shoulder. "What?" she cried sharply.

"I don't wish to marry Martha," I repeated more firmly.

My aunt resumed her knitting, clicking her needles viciously.

"Of course you wish to marry Martha," she contradicted relentlessly. "Any one would wish to marry Martha. And you were obviously made for each other. Besides, every one expects you to marry her. She herself expects it."

"I don't believe Martha expects me to marry her," I doggedly remarked.

"Of course she does," exclaimed my aunt im-

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patiently. “Though it is n’t likely she ’d let you know it. There is n’t a finer girl in the world.”

“I ’m sorry you ’ve set your heart on this,” I said miserably. “I suppose I should have told you sooner. I can’t marry Martha. I appreciate her, but I ’m not in love with her. A man can’t control those things.”

“Poppycock!” said my aunt.

She knitted furiously for a few minutes. Then she paused and spoke in a bleak voice.

“I will certainly go up in that crazy machine now. And unless you marry Martha you shall never see the Dulworthy furniture. I shall leave it to Martha—ever stick of it.”

With this she strode grimly into the house.

I might have argued with her until the crack of doom, but she would have seen nothing in life for me but Martha Peddon. I realized that she had thought of me as ordained from birth to become the husband of Martha Peddon, just as I was ordained from birth to become a shining light at the bar. But I was wiser now than when I submitted to be trained to the law.

I was to take Martha for a sail later in the afternoon and I kept out of Aunt Abigail’s sight

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until Martha was ready to start. The girl had donned a blue and white sailor suit which became her well. I had never seen her so becomingly dressed. She was a fine figure—and her attractiveness irritated me. Aunt Abigail, smiling slyly, saw us off at the landing place.

First we sailed across to the island inhabited by sunburned young women, where I telephoned to the railroad company to ascertain if by any chance my aeroplane had arrived a day ahead of schedule time. I was informed it was expected the next morning. When I returned to Martha, another boat had just arrived from Merryport bringing New York morning papers. Martha had purchased one to see if there was anything about my case.

I was now rather late but there was still time for a sail. We headed up the coast with a brisk off-shore breeze abeam, picking our way among the islands through the sparkling waters. Our craft could not be described as a racer, but she moved along at a good pace. Martha perused the newspaper quietly. I was glad she refrained from conversation. The keen, salt breeze seemed to be blowing some of my melancholy away.

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I wondered if Martha really expected me to marry her. I could scarcely believe it. She had shown great interest in me and my work, but it had hitherto appeared to me a sisterly interest. Certainly we had never acted or spoken like lovers. When we shook hands, her grasp was firm and cool. It conveyed no thrills to me. And the touch of Rose Allingham's little finger was enough to set me all afire. . . . But I had no business thinking even of Rose Allingham's little finger any more.

Martha had set down her paper and produced some embroidery at which she worked placidly. In her clear, business-like manner she asked me to explain the principles of the aeroplane. This I expounded at length to the best of my ability and Martha asked some intelligent questions. I was glad to keep the conversation on a topic so impersonal as aeroplanes.

"I suppose they may be useful some day," commented Martha. "But at present they seem to be mere playthings. I hate to see men wasting their time on frivolous things." Martha had a passion for utility.

"Even Newton lay on his back in the orchard," I suggested.

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"But he was thinking," said Martha.

She discovered that the sun was setting and inquired about the time. Before we started, she had asked if I had my watch. It was in my pocket, but I now found that I had apparently forgotten to wind it that morning and it had stopped.

I am one of those men who are constitutionally unable to keep a watch or a razor in a state of efficiency.

Martha suggested that we turn back and I obediently put the boat about.

Martha idly picked up the paper again, and suddenly she glanced at me with an odd expression.

"Oh, Henry," she cried tremulously, "why did n't you tell me?"

It flashed into my mind that she must have been reading an account of Rose Allingham's engagement in which my unfortunate pretensions came in for derisive mention. Had Mrs. Van Amstel gone that far?—I wondered, with a sinking of the heart.

"I guessed something was worrying you, but I did n't dream of anything like this," faltered Martha.

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With a sob she handed me the paper.
“What?” I stammered. “Where?”

Her finger trembled over a paragraph and I read:

“Charges were filed to-day with the Bar Association for the disbarment of Henry Dulworthy, a lawyer at 52 Park Place. Attorney Herman Bernstein, the complainant, alleges that Dulworthy, through a clerk, paid one Solomon Hammel ten dollars to undertake a litigation. Bernstein declares—”

So that was the gist of J. Zinsheimer’s decisive interview with Hammel. In his ignorant zeal at “getting a hustle” for new business, he had overshot the line of legal morality. I was disgraced, branded with bribery, all over a little, tuppenny bankruptcy. I read the thing through to the end and then dropped the paper on the floor and burst into harsh laughter.

“Oh, Henry,” cried Martha, looking at me in dismay, “what will Aunt Abigail say? What will become of your career?”

I thought bitterly that the loss of my career was but a trifling annoyance to me, who had just lost Rose Allingham.

“To hell with my career,” I said.

XIX

MAROONED

AFTER I calmed down somewhat, I explained to Martha that I had not been personally guilty of dishonest practices. Neither, according to his lights, had J. Zinsheimer. He had simply, out of loyalty to me, done a foolish thing. Of course he could not have known his act was illegal. The law was his goddess whom he worshiped with blind fidelity. He was too devout to affront her by any wilfully illegal act.

"You must not let Aunt Abigail know," said Martha. "And you must clear your honor at any cost."

"I shall of course answer the charges," I replied doubtfully. "But I don't know—I may be disbarred after all."

"But you must not be disbarred," cried Martha. "Henry, I have a few hundred dollars saved up. You must use them to clear your name."

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I looked at her—her eyes were shining. In confusion I looked away. “Oh, Martha!” I faltered.

“And this young man of yours—his name makes me mistrust him,” said Martha. “Surely you will discharge him immediately, Henry.”

I never replied to this suggestion of Martha’s. Suddenly there was a roar as of artillery, my cap was whirled off my head and our little craft careened until water poured over the gunwale. The air was full of dust and spin-drift and in an instant I found we were dashing headlong out into the ocean in a lashing gale and a boiling sea. A white squall from the west had pounced on us out of a cloudless sky.

“You can’t upset a Cape Cod dory,” is a proverb among amateur sailors. Our craft was of the Cape Cod type, despite our northward distance from the Cape, and I found the proverb rather comforting during the next few minutes, though several times I expected it to be disproved. But if our craft could not be upset, it was equally impossible to control it. It was like a stallion that has taken the bit in

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his teeth. Its sudden passion for Europe was not to be gainsaid. I was nearly flung out into the sea trying to head the dory into the wind. And I speedily discovered that no human strength could accomplish this and persistent endeavors would probably overturn us. So I let the mad thing drive along, keeping her on as even a keel as possible.

"Where are we going?" asked Martha anxiously.

"At the present rate," I replied, "we shall probably strike the coast of Spain, somewhat north of Gibraltar, in a few hours. Don't worry."

"I'm not worrying," said Martha. "But I'm afraid my blue silk yarn is ruined and I did want to get back in time to make some popovers for supper."

I was particularly sensitive to the fascination of popovers.

However, at that time, the contemplation of popovers was not for me. All my energies were strained toward keeping us right side up in that walloping sea. Green water splashed over our rails, our trailing sail dipped into the waves in our perilous careenings, and momen-

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tarily I feared that our slender mast, which was bending under the heavy pressure, would snap.

Suddenly, through the drift, I caught a glimpse of land ahead. It was a little island, curiously pink in color. I could not make up my mind whether it was better to drive into it, head on, or to dodge it and continue for the open sea. We were being projected at such a pace that I feared a moderate-sized island would not stop us. We were likely to strike a rock and bound clear over it. I soon discovered, however, that such speculations were futile as it became apparent we must miss the land by a narrow margin. I glanced wistfully at a strip of sandy beach. It would have made a fine landing place. And at that instant I caught a glimpse of two nasty, gray rocks looming dead in our path out of a smother of foam.

I flung my whole weight against the tiller. For a minute it looked as if we were over. The sail caught on one of the rocks and we hung at a precarious angle while water poured in over the lee rail. Then we were swept forward again. There was a grinding crash immedi-

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ately after this and I felt the floor of the boat bulge up under my feet. We had struck on a submerged rock. A gust of wind tore a great gash in the sail and we were flung upon the little beach with a jolt that sent both Martha and me tumbling. I fell on my right wrist across a seat.

"Are you hurt?" cried Martha, scrambling up.

"I don't know," I replied, rather dazed with shock, but increasingly conscious of sharp pains in my wrist. "Are you all right?"

To my astonishment Martha sank down in a heap on the sand and began to cry. I had never seen a girl cry before and I hadn't the faintest notion what to do or say.

"I'm sorry—I can't help it," sobbed Martha. "I never had anything like that happen to me before. I'll be all right—soon."

It occurred to me that she had acted splendidly, and I told her so, and presently she recovered and dried her eyes.

The squall, meanwhile, was abating almost as rapidly as it had risen. The air was clear toward the mainland and the sun shone brightly.

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"You may be able to make those popovers after all," I said.

But as soon as I looked at the boat, I saw that this was an idle boast. Near the stern there was a jagged hole in the planking as big as my lost hat.

"Martha," I said gravely, "we are marooned."

"Well, let 's try to find some one to take us off," said Martha. "I don't want Aunt Abigail to worry."

The patch of beach we had been pitched upon was in a little pocket in the rocks, wherein the rest of the island was shielded from view. In the excitement of our headlong approach, neither Martha nor I had taken in the details of the place. Indeed, at that time, it was enshrouded in a cloud of dust blown off shore by the fury of the squall, and was scarcely more than a blur—a pinkish blur. I had attributed the singular color to the pinkish light caused by the squall.

I was about to scale the wall of rock that shut us in, when I saw that some one had painted a sign across it in large, blue lettering. This read:

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TRESPASSING CAMPING PERMITTED

"That's perfectly insane," commented practical Martha.

"It appears to me rather hospitable," I said. "But I fear the island is not inhabited."

I had some difficulty climbing the rocks, for I found my right hand practically useless. As soon as I gained the top, I saw that my forebodings were justified. There was no house on the island. It was bare of shelter, save for a little rustic pavilion, thatched with pine branches, on the northern side. I found myself on a little eminence. Near me a spring gushed out of the rocks, but all about was low, level, sandy land all aflame with the pink marshmallow. This profuse growth gave the island a tropical appearance anomalous in that region, where the insular vegetation was sparse. I called Martha to look.

While I was admiring the marshmallows, Martha pointed out another island to seaward, separated from ours by a narrow strait. This land was somewhat larger than the island on

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which we stood. It might have been two hundred yards long at its widest diameter, which stretched away from us. The island rose, in the center, to a rocky hillock, and beyond this, on the farther side, we could see the upper story of a red cottage with gables. On the northern side of the island was a brick hut, with a chimney from which a wisp of smoke curled.

Martha and I hurried to the shore of the strait. I shouted solo. Then Martha called. Then we both woke the echoes together. From the chimney of the hut, smoke continued to ascend, but no curious human being appeared to ascertain the cause of our vociferations. And finally we became very hoarse and disgusted and I was aware that the sun was setting and there was a suggestion of chill in the air.

"If I could use my right arm, I could swim the confounded strait," I said. "But I can't do anything with it."

Martha looked at me in sudden dismay. "How can you run the aeroplane?" she cried. "Aunt Abigail will lose the furniture after all."

"I hadn't thought of that," I faltered. "I'm afraid I couldn't even sign my name."

I felt my limp wrist ruefully. It displayed

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an ugly inflammation and felt as if a red-hot sword were being twisted about within it.

"If Aunt Abigail loses the furniture it will break her heart," said Martha.

"She could go up with some one else," I suggested.

"I'm sure she will never make the ascent with a stranger," declared Martha.

"I'm afraid she won't," I confessed hopelessly.

I felt, as we stared at each other in dismay, that I had made another failure.

XX

UNEXPECTED PIRATES

THE island with the red cottage was evidently a refuge for the deaf. At least that was our conclusion when, in the falling dusk, we abandoned our attempts to rouse its inhabitants. The smoke that drifted so tantalizingly from the chimney of the brick hut indicated at least one inhabitant. But he was oblivious to our calls. So we went disconsolately to the little shelter on the northern shore of the island, following a faint trail through the marshmallow bushes.

Beside the shelter stood a pile of wood and just in front of it was a fine natural fireplace in a ledge of rock, but of course I had no matches, so we could not build a fire. It was evident we were in for an uncomfortable night together. Aunt Abigail would be horribly worried, but there was no help for that.

Martha worked at her embroidery until it

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grew too dark for her to see. And thereafter we maintained a desultory conversation. Unfortunately I had little to say because each minute I grew more and more embarrassed. It was obvious to me that the predicament had compromised both of us. We must spend the night alone together, and I knew that if Aunt Abigail had requested me to marry Martha before, she would insist on it now. In matters of etiquette I was thoroughly unsophisticated, but I had a growing sense of the gossip that would spread about after this night. Yes, assuredly, we were compromised beyond repair. Martha was merely a vague shape in the darkness now. I could not see her face and I was glad of it.

Martha suddenly remembered that the tide was rising and we must look to our wrecked boat, lest it float away. I insisted upon seeing to this alone. There was an anchor in the boat, so I could easily make it fast. It was an immeasurable relief to get away from Martha.

I stumbled across the island in the darkness and with some difficulty discovered the pocket in the rocks where we had landed. The little

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beach was nearly covered now with the rising tide and our boat had already been caught up in it. I could see it, a white blur against the black water, but I could not recover it.

I did not wish to go back to Martha immediately, so I sat down at the top of the cliff and passed my misfortunes in review.

The futility of my existence overwhelmed me. I was as effective as a fly imprisoned in a huge cask of molasses. What a muddle I had made of things! When chance had given me an opportunity to win my spurs at all, I had been unfaithful to my trust; now, through carelessness, I was in a way to be disbarred from practice; I had quarreled with my aunt, and I had lost the Dulworthy furniture. But even these things were trifles compared with the loss of the one thing I had really set my heart on in the world. Rose Allingham had passed out of my life- that was the overwhelming factor in my despair.

What did the other things matter now? What matter even if I must marry Martha? For it appeared to me that both decency and duty required me to offer to marry Martha. Fate, like a rough policeman, had hustled me

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inexorably Marthowards. It was not the direction I wished to go—but then I had lost my original destination anyway. By yielding, I would make two persons happy—Aunt Abigail and Martha. Yes, fate was too strong for me. I must marry Martha. Staring into the black night, I gritted my teeth and said firmly: “I will marry Martha.” And I told myself that I must propose to her immediately.

It did not occur to me that there was anything ridiculous in this resolve. That I was practically a bankrupt, and, in a sense, under a cloud of disgrace, did not enter into my considerations at all.

Presently I went back to the shelter.

“The boat is gone, Martha,” I said.

“That can’t be helped,” replied Martha. “I hope you won’t get cold, Henry.”

I prowled about nervously. “The moon will be up soon. I think it’s full to-night,” I suggested irrelevantly.

“I’m counting on it to furnish enough light for me to resume my sewing,” said Martha. “I hate to sit here idle.”

I walked to the edge of the water and stared at the ripples, like delicate white lace edging a

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black dress. “You’re sure you’re not cold?” came Martha’s voice.

I returned to the shelter, with the feeling of one who plunges into black water.

“Martha,” I said, “I—I—that is—I want to ask you if you will marry me, Martha.”

There was a little silence during which Martha did not even move and the outer darkness was like a cavernous ear listening.

“Henry Dulworthy!” exclaimed Martha.

“I’m sure it would please Aunt Abigail,” I said lamentably.

“Are you asking me to marry you to please Aunt Abigail?” inquired Martha with startling directness. “I’m almost sure you’re not in love with me.”

“I—we’ve known each other a long time,” I continued desperately. “Besides, here we are spending the night together on this island. Of course we can’t help it—but there’ll be talk—horrible gossip. You know there will. ^{Cra} must consider those things. I’m sure it’s the proper thing.”

“People don’t get married because they are marooned on an island or because it will please some relative,” said Martha.

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“But—” I began.

“They get married because they fall in love,” pursued Martha.

I felt that I was making a fearful hash of it. I ought to lie, to say I was in love with her, but somehow my tongue refused to frame the words.

“Don’t you see—” I essayed.

“Wait!” exclaimed Martha. “Listen!”

The quiet of the night was being punctured by a series of sharp reports that appeared to come from behind the easterly side of the island.

“Motor boat,” I muttered.

“It’s coming nearer,” said Martha. “Henry, we can talk over your offer, which at present puzzles me, later. But if we can possibly hail the people in that boat, it’s our business to do so immediately.”

“Wait here,” I said.

“All right. I’ll catch them if they come to this side,” replied Martha.

I rushed off through the tangle of bushes, happy at the release. “What an ass I was not to wait,” I reproached myself. “Perhaps I needn’t have said it after all.”

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By the time I got near the shore, not far from where we had landed, the boat appeared to be quite near and was coming on more slowly. Peering into the darkness, I spied a faint light, moving upon the black expanse of water. I was about to cry a hail, when the engine stopped suddenly and a man's voice came out of the darkness.

“This must be the island. We 're very close now. Watch out for rocks.”

Then a girl said:

“There 's a little landing place here on the southern side somewhere. I 'll take a look.”

The man's articulation had sounded vaguely familiar, but the girl was unmistakably Rose. I stopped short, my heart pounding at my throat.

The next instant a slender beam of light flashed out from the boat and fluttered along the shore, finally revealing, directly in front of me, a miniature wooden pier jutting out from the beach. I stepped back nervously, dodging the zone of illumination.

“There!” said a third voice, feminine.

“Hold that, Rosie,” admonished the man, whom I recognized as Manor. “If we get ar-

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rested for trespassing, I 'll cut a fine figure in the morning."

Rose giggled and he started his engine again.

I crept back farther into the shadow, my cheeks burning, while the newcomers warped in slowly at the little pier. The prospect of being rescued by Rose and Manor was particularly distasteful. In every fiber of me, I loathed to meet them. I wished myself a thousand miles away—I wished I was dead.

The moon had suddenly appeared on the eastern horizon, smudged and bloated, like a monstrous orange, and in its light I could see Rose and Manor getting out of the boat. A third figure, of wonderful girth, remained seated in the stern. That was probably Rose's Aunt Gertrude. Rose was in white. She looked, in the moonlight, like a dainty ghost.

The pair began moving up the slope toward me, and I started to steal off through the bushes.

"Wait!" whispered Manor. "There 's something moving."

They stopped and I crouched down.

"I don't hear anything," said Rose presently. I noticed that her voice trembled.

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They came forward again and I resumed my stealthy retreat.

“I’m sure I hear something moving,” Manor whispered again, a minute later. Then my foot slipped on a rock and I came down with a crash.

The next instant their light was shining in my face. “Why, it’s your bug man, Rosie!” exclaimed Manor. Rose gave a little scream. She was clinging to his arm. Her face was paper white. Laughing in his lusty fashion, Manor helped me to my feet.

“What the deuce are you doing here? Going in for hermiting?” he asked.

“We were marooned,” I began.

“We?” questioned Manor.

“There’s a young lady with me,” I explained.

“Ah, yes!” exclaimed Manor. “Miss Peddon. Saw her name in the *Merryport Clarion*. So you sneaked away from Auntie and got wrecked in the moonlight, eh?”

“Mr. Manor—” I started angrily.

“Did n’t think you had it in you,” continued Manor banteringly. “Thought you only cared about bugs. But this—why, you’re a regular satyr. Compromising a poor girl like this.

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Shipwrecked here in the moonlight, and you have n't even got a hat on. Hope you 'll do the proper thing, Dulworthy."

"Bobby!" Rose protested.

I felt like striking out with my fist at his smiling face. "I have asked Miss Peddon to marry me," I said coldly.

"Ah! Congratulations," said Manor. "Rosie, a romance."

I glanced at Rose, puzzled at her continued silence. And straightway she began to giggle foolishly. I was astonished, because she was not of the giggling type. Manor also looked at her curiously.

"I 've left my handkerchief in the boat," she said abruptly, turning away. "I 'm going back for it."

"Let me get it, Rosie," offered Manor.

"You go ahead and begin picking," said Rose. "I think the flowers are better farther on. They look as big as bonfires. Back in a minute."

Somewhat dazed, I followed Manor as he moved on.

"You see, we 're here on a little matter of piracy," explained Manor. "Come to steal

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some flowers. Rosie insisted on getting some for the convention hall, and I offered to buy all the roses in Merryport, but nothing would do but we must steal some of these marshmallows and go home by moonlight. Queer things, girls. If I was n’t awfully fond of Rosie I would n’t have stood for it. Here I am, a perfectly respectable—”

“Millionaire,” I interposed gruffly.

“Millionaire,” he conceded, laughing, “who would n’t steal anything less than a railroad, going in for a common burgling proposition where I’m likely to land in the cooler. Well, this looks like a good place to do the pilfering. Where’s your girl, anyway?”

Martha appeared just before Rose returned with Miss Allingham, and I performed some very awkward introductions. Miss Allingham seemed to enjoy the encounter hugely. She was a veritable mountain of gasps and chuckles and regarded Martha and me alternately with a highly humorous air. I supposed Rose had told her of Manor’s banter and my defiant declaration. As for Manor, he kept staring at Martha to the point of rudeness.

We all began to pluck the flowers. I recall

Unexpected Pirates

how I hated them. They appeared to me abominable flora. As I bent to my task, Martha was exchanging light badinage with Manor, close at hand, and from somewhere behind me, from time to time, Miss Allingham chuckled idiotically. Her merriment enraged me beyond measure. At one time I had thought her a kindly, sensible woman. But after all she was merely a snickering old fool! I moved some distance away from the others, to escape the intolerable sounds of her ventral mirth. I stood, staring at the ground, too utterly downcast to make even a pretense at gathering the flowers.

"You're not working very hard," said a voice presently, at my elbow.

"Oh!" I cried, startled at seeing Rose, her arms filled with the luxurious blossoms.

"Why, you've hurt your wrist!" he exclaimed abruptly, casting down her flowers. She seized my injured limb very gently and scrutinized it with anxious eyes. "Mr. Hobby, it's swollen like a toy balloon!"

I stammered some reassuring incoherencies, for her nearness and the touch of her hand on my arm sent the blood whirling to my head.

"Mr. Hobby"

"I wish I could do something," said Rose wistfully, as she released me.

I helped her recover her flowers and the incident was closed. I made a pretense at picking marshmallows.

"I congratulate you on Miss Peddon," said Rose presently, in a more formal tone. "She's charming."

"And I must offer you my best wishes, too," I retorted stiltedly.

Rose plucked a huge flower, sniffed at it thoughtfully and added it to her armful.

"That newspaper article was a mistake. I'm not engaged to Bobby," she said quietly.

I gaped at her, smitten with horror. "Not engaged!" I gasped, dropping most of my marshmallows.

"Of course not. The report was absurd," said Rose. Then she glanced at me and laughed merrily. "Is it such a calamity that I'm not engaged? You look as if the bottom had dropped out of the world."

"It has dropped out of my world," I said lamentably.

"Here, pirates! Back to the boat!" called Manor. "If we get any more posies there won't be room in the hall for the highbrows."

XXI

ROSE

WE found Manor rushing to and fro along the shore giving vent to exclamations of dismay. Martha stood gazing anxiously out upon the waters and Miss Allingham sat on a rock with a flaming mound of flowers at her feet. She was smiling inscrutably and reminded me of a huge Buddha. In fact, she might have posed there as a statue of Mrs. Buddha.

“What’s the matter?” I called to Manor.

“The boat!” he shouted, waving his hand seaward, and disappeared behind a rocky point.

“Gone!” said Miss Allingham, with a grave, Buddhistic gesture.

Manor reappeared again, running. “No sign of her,” he panted. “I can’t understand it.”

“Are you sure you tied it properly?” asked Martha.

“Three half hitches—enough to hold a man—

"Mr. Hobby"

o'-war," declared Manor. "Was she all right when you left, Rosie?"

"I thought you tied it very nicely," replied Rose.

"Nice mess," said Manor, and we all joined him in hunting along the shore again and peering out to sea. But there was no trace of the boat. So finally we reluctantly gave it up, and, on Martha's suggestion, lined up along the shore of the strait and shouted across in chorus to see if we could rouse some one on the cottage island.

The island, Rose explained, was not a deaf asylum. It was inhabited by an old hermit about whom practically nothing was known. For all Rose's knowledge, he might be deaf, and after a time we concluded he must be, for though we made noise enough to disturb the distant sentries on Gibraltar, no hermit appeared with an answering hail. There was some one in the little hut, for a lurid glow from an unseen window was reflected on the bushes outside and smoke still floated from the chimney—like a golden scarf flung out against the velvety, purp' sky.

"This is a mess," repeated Manor impa-

Rose

tiently. He continued to complain until after we decided to go to the shelter and make ourselves as comfortable as possible. But to me his complaints appeared monstrously disproportionate to the calamity. He was merely marooned for a night. But I had marooned myself for a lifetime with Martha. My existence appeared to be merely one mess after another.

Manor, of course, had matches, and he attempted, in an awkward, urban fashion, to build a fire. But the wood was damp and refused to burn for him. Fortunately I have camped out enough to be an adept at getting a fire started, and after he gave it up I soon, to every one's astonishment, had a cheerful blaze going. Martha appeared quite proud of my skill. But I was not proud. I knew there was no money in building fires.

In fact, the brighter the fire burned, the lower fell my spirits. I sat where Rose's profile was turned to me and in the wavering light her hair was like spun gold and her face like tinted ivory carved by a god in a dream. Never before had I seen her so beautiful and desirable. Her loose-fitting gray sweater lent to her figure

Mr. Hobby"

peculiarly alluring femininity. And I sat in shadow and spelllessly adored.

Rose was in gay humor. And Martha, too, displayed a buoyancy that astonished me. The two young women appeared to be vying with other—and Martha did not come off a poor

second. I had never suspected her capable of displaying such sensational powers. She was full with fine stories of the experiences she had in numerous schools at which Miss Finghams had also shook like a leaf.

Martha roused Manor from his reverie. His high tenor laugh was peculiar to him. He was chatting like a boy. The two young women acted like youngsters on holiday.

The night dragged interminably because of Martha's high spirits. She lay down at last—and her whole being expanded with happiness. From time to time I saw Manor glancing, with a puzzled expression, from the merry girl to my glum fiancee. I suppose he wondered what attraction she found in such a dull person as myself.

1 for the dawn as a prisoner craves

Rose

the open. "Now," I would assure myself, "it must be midnight. Now it is one o'clock. Now two o'clock." And just as I was thinking it must be near three, I was appalled to have Manor glance at his watch and announce that it was not yet twelve.

"So far the experience is much jollier than I anticipated," said Miss Allingham, rising. "If I could only get a cushion to sit on and a glass of water, I should be thoroughly comfortable."

"I can get you the water. There's a spring," I said, glad of a few minutes' respite away from the firelight.

"And I'll go and yelp a bit at the hermit," said Manor. "Will you come, Rose?"

"I feel like the Sahara desert," said Rose, to my dismay. "I'm for the spring."

We all stretched our limbs, which we found were a bit stiff, and in the new alignment Martha drew me aside swiftly.

"I want to answer your offer of this evening, Henry," she whispered. "I think I understand it now."

"Yes," I replied hopelessly, composing myself for my fate.

"Mr. Hobby"

"You dear Don Quixote!" exclaimed Martha, pressing my hand. "Of course it 's 'No.' The whole idea is absurd."

Involuntarily I gave a joyous exclamation and then I tried to look properly melancholy. But when I dared meet Martha's eyes, I saw she was laughing at me. "You goose!" she murmured. "You 're as clear as crystal, Henry."

With that she pushed me toward the fire again and Rose held out her hand.

"You 'll have to lead me," she said. I felt all my blood leap into my fingers to meet hers.

I thought Manor watched me ill-naturedly as I stepped out of the bright circle into the wan-ing moonlight with Rose's hand in mine, but I felt as if I were treading moonbeams.

"It is n't necessary to cripple my hand," pro- tested Rose.

I stumbled on through the undergrowth, too excited to pay heed to my footing, sometimes losing Rose's hand and again rapturously re-gaining it. Once or twice I tripped and nearly fell, dragging Rose down with me.

"You 'd make a graceful dancer, Mr.

Rose

Hobby," said Rose, with a merry ripple of laughter.

"It 's a long time since any one called me Mr. Hobby," I commented gratefully.

"I suppose Miss Peddon calls you dearie," speculated Rose. "Or possibly honeybunch. If it 's the latter I 'm awfully glad she 's restrained. I simply can't endure hearing human beings honeybunch each other."

"She does n't," I said uncomfortably.

"I 'm glad of that," said Rose. "She does n't look like the honeybunch sort. I 'd love to have heard you proposing, Mr. Hobby. Did you get down on your knees, as they do in the old-fashioned story books?"

"No," I said gruffly.

"I 'm impertinent," confessed Rose.

"I 'm not engaged to Martha Peddon," I said.

"Oh, but you said—"

"I said I had asked her. She 's just answered—'No.' "

We had arrived at the spring. Rose sank down upon a mossy rock, overcome with laughter. Her mirth appeared to me immoderate and in rather poor taste. I tried to look at

"Mr. Hobby"

her with an expression of disapproval, but for the life of me I could only summon a fatuous smile.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Rose. "So that's why you've been so grumpy."

"It is n't," I declared testily. "I only asked her from a sense of duty."

Rose succumbed to another paroxysm of laughter. She appeared to be rapidly working toward hysterics and I was puzzled at her extravagant behavior. Finally she began to gasp and choke until I had to kneel down and pound her on the back. And from this, before I realized it, my left arm, the only usable one, was about her waist.

"I presume," said Rose, recovering her gravity with an effort, "that this pose is the result of a sense of duty."

She extricated herself deftly and sat gracefully upon the moss, regarding my confusion with a judicious smile. As I looked at her, a lump gathered in my throat and my heart began leaping wildly, as if it had been transformed into a vivacious kangaroo.

"Rose—Rose—" I stammered. "I—I—" My tongue failed me utterly.

Rose

"We had best be getting back with the water" she suggested softly. There was a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

"Rose," I cried, "I am a poor specimen of a man, very incompetent and useless, but I love you. You wondered, when you came to my office, why I let my wretched specimens die. It was because, without you, I had no interest in the world. I could think of nothing without you. I love you, Rose."

Her eyes looked into mine gravely and then suddenly they dropped. "Oh!" she cried. "Oh, Mr. Hobby, I am too selfish and frivolous for any use."

I sprang forward and lifted her face to mine and felt the quick pressure of her arms across my shoulder. . . .

"Poor boy!" said Rose, after a time. "Were you starved?"

"I have been starving all my life," I replied, looking down at the happy miracle of her in my arms. "Oh, Rose, how could you fall in love with such a useless dreamer as I?"

Rose took my face between her two hands. "I love you," she said, "because you are you. And also because you care so little about law

“Mr. Hobby”

and so much about bugs—and because your hair is so straggly.”

She rumpled it with her fingers until it stood up like the comb of a rooster. “Now,” she said, kissing me on the forehead, “you look as if you could crow.”

“I’m afraid it’s a very foolish love, dear,” said I. “I’m a tank failure. I’ve made a terrible muddle of my law business.”

I told her of my threatening disbarment, but Rose did not appear to take this seriously.

“I hope you will be disbarred,” she declared, with startling feminine assurance. “Then you can devote yourself to bugs and me.”

“But there’s no money in bugs,” I protested.

“Who says there’s no money in bugs?” demanded Rose.

“Manor says it, and J. Zinsheimer, my office boy, says it,” I declared. “And, my dearest, I’m beginning to think it’s true.”

“Nonsense,” declared Rose. “All these men who are coming to the Congress are finding money in bugs and I’m sure most of them have n’t half so much bug knowledge as you. We’ll have to see how they do it. We simply



At the spring

Rose

must find some money in bugs. Are n't you going to tell them about that wonderful new beetle of yours?"

"How did you know about that?" I asked, wondering.

Rose chuckled. "I thought, that day in the office, that you liked me," she said. "And I was n't going to lose all trace of you because father and Aunt Van were nasty. So one day when you were out I made love to J. Zinsheimer and he 's been writing me all about you ever since."

That explained my office boy's epistolary activity. "Incomparable Johnny!" I cried.

"If I had to hire a lawyer, sir, I 'd prefer him to you," declared Rose. "But in regard to bugs I hold you second to none. You must show off a bit before the Congress. The new bug may make your fortune—our fortune," she added prettily.

I felt exceedingly doubtful of any such possibility, but I drew courage from her brave, hopeful eyes. "How old are you, Rose?" I asked.

"Twenty-one," she said. I gave her a kiss for each year.

"I 've had a dreadful time waiting for you,

“Mr. Hobby”

Mr. Hobby,” said Rose presently. “You see, Aunt Van came to me and said father’s business was failing and that made it imperative to marry Bobby. When I asked father he said it was true about his business—and I’m ashamed to say he also urged me to take Bobby. But the more I thought it over the more I realized I could n’t marry any one as a matter of duty.

“Then Aunt Van gave that awful story to the papers. When I read it, I was miserable. I was afraid Bobby must hate me. I supposed the announcement would annoy him tremendously and I liked him too much not to be sorry. You can like people without being in love with them, dear.”

“Yes,” I assented, thinking of Martha. “But why did Manor say the story was true?”

“Only from a sense of duty,” replied Rose, slyly. “But after he read it he did come on from New York to do the proper thing, which was a formal proposal of marriage. That came late this afternoon.”

“And you rejected him,” I said quickly.

“Don’t frown so terribly, Mr. Hobby,” admonished Rose. “I didn’t accept him—but I

Rose

did n't exactly reject 'im, because he had a motor boat."

"I don't see what that has to do with it," I remarked petulantly.

"Everything, Silly!" declared Rose. "You see, I knew you were due at Plum Island to-day. So this afternoon I took father's telescope up on the roof—our house is on a hill facing Plum Island—and watched for you. Aunt Gertrude thought I was crazy, I suppose. Well, I saw you start out in the boat with your Miss Peddon and—"

"Rose!" I protested. "*My* Miss Peddon!"

"Really, Mr. Hobby, you have the most atrocious manners and no sense of humor whatever," asserted Rose sweetly. "I saw you sail over to the big island and get out and then I watched you start off again and go northward. And how I wished myself in that boat instead of Miss Peddon! I had n't seen you in so long, Hobby dear! I kept my glass on you until your sail was just a film—and then the squall struck and wiped everything out of my vision. And when the air cleared, there was no sign of you. It was terrible for me, sitting there and spying all over the ocean for you and seeing nothing

“Mr. Hobby”

but the blank sea. I hoped you had been blown on this island. I prayed that you were. But I couldn't find you in the glass. And every few minutes Aunt Gertrude called up that Bobby was waiting for me below. I wouldn't let him come up. I couldn't stop crying.”

There was an interlude during which I demonstrated my appreciation of this.

“At last,” she continued, “I pressed the tears in and went down--and Bobby proposed immediately. All the time he was talking, I was thinking about his motor boat. I didn't really want any marshmallow flowers--they were just a subterfuge to get here. And immediately after I arrived you said you were engaged to Miss Peddon! No wonder I was hysterical!”

“The green-eyed monster!” I exclaimed, laughing.

“As soon as I collected my wits after you spoke of Miss Peddon,” continued Rose, “I went right down and talked to Aunt Gertrude and said I was going to stay on this island until I got you away from her. Then I set the boat adrift.”

“Why, Rose, the boat may be lost,” I pro-

Rose

tested. "It 's probably worth several thousand dollars."

Rose laughed in the delightful way I remembered.

"I was n't going to let a little thing like a motor boat stand in my way," she said. "I would have turned loose the whole United States navy."

The record of the rest of our conversation is not particularly material. Indeed the dialogue of lovers is at once too delicate and tremendous to bear reproduction in cold print. One can describe the splendor of the solar universe or the flavor of an old wine, but once the pen attempts to portray the talk of Him and Her the result is an infinitude of trivialities. It is our habit to laugh at the talk of lovers, because we are not always in love. But to lovers, words do not matter. Their lips may be uttering very common and stupid things, but their spirits are soaring with the stars, wafted with celestial harmonies.

We had a thousand confidences to exchange, a thousand discoveries to make, to evoke a thousand new intimacies and endearments, as we sat upon that damp rock in the chill air, ob-

“Mr. Hobby”

livious of discomfort and our waiting friends and the world. Before us the little spring gurgled sleepily over the stones and at our feet the forgotten dipper glimmered faintly in the rays of the moon.

We were astonished to discover, finally, that the moon was no longer visible. While we talked it had slipped unnoticed over the edge of the horizon.

“I’m afraid you’re the most careless of water carriers, Henry,” reproached Rose. “I hope Aunt Gertrude has not died of thirst.”

“Do you suppose we’ve been here very long?” I asked, glancing over the sky in dismay as if I expected the moon to pop out again somewhere.

“Possibly several hours,” declared Rose.

“Seriously,” I admitted.

“Scandalously long,” said Rose. “My reputation must be in shreds.”

“I suppose they have missed us,” I acknowledged and groped about for the dipper.

We picked our way back to the fire where we found Miss Allingham sitting alone. She was asleep and resembled more than ever some oriental deity. But as soon as we arrived she

Rose

opened her eyes and regarded us with smiling curiosity.

"I hope you did not hurry," she said.

Tending the dipper, I started to stammer an apology, but Rose unexpectedly pushed me aside and flung herself into her aunt's arms.

"Oh, I've such a delicious secret for you, Aunt Gert," she whispered. "We're engaged."

"Bless us!" exclaimed Miss Allingham. "No wonder it took you two hours to get that dipper of water." She beamed upon us both in turn. "I suppose, young man, you have learned how to make ever so much money?" she added.

"I—I'm practically penniless, Miss Allingham," I confessed.

Miss Allingham looked down at Rose's beseeching face and then she shook with laughter. "So are we," she said. "We'll all be beggars together."

"You're a dear!" said Rose. And we all laughed.

"But where are Bobby and Miss Pedden?" asked Rose presently.

"They went off for a stroll, too," replied

“Mr. Hobby”

Miss Allingham, with an allusiveness that awoke in my mind a romantic idea. “Dear me, they ‘ve been gone ever so long.”

“Rose, do you suppose they—” I began.

“I think it quite probable they might—” declared Miss Allingham, wiping the tears from her eyes.

“The very thing. They must!” said Rose decisively.

The objects of our sentimental speculations appeared out of the darkness.

“We can cross to the hermit’s island. Tide ‘s down,” said Manor.

“We found a row of stepping stones,” added Martha.

“Did you people just get back?” added Manor, looking from Rose to me curiously. “What were you doing? Digging a well?”

XXII

THE HERMIT

THE strip of water between the two islands had almost entirely disappeared, leaving a strip of black mud, across which Manor pointed out a row of stepping stones. These appeared to make a rather precarious footing, but Manor tested them and found them firm enough, though slippery. He lighted us across, with matches, and we made the passage safely amid much laughter.

A glow of light still came from the brick hut, so we picked our way around to the front of this, which faced away from the island we had just quitted. The door was open, revealing a bare interior littered with bits of machinery and chemical apparatus. In the rear of the room was a brick furnace, in full blast, above which was hung a huge copper caldron, with curious adjustments like a kettledrum, and in front of this, devotedly observing its contents,

"Mr. Hobby"

stood an elderly man, small in stature, dressed in shabby gray trousers and a gray flannel shirt. In one hand he held a thermometer, encased in a wooden frame. His back was toward the door and he had obviously not observed our approach. Rose and I coughed simultaneously, to attract his attention, but he did not turn from his labors.

"Beg your pardon"—shouted Manor abruptly.

"Just a minute, please," replied the man in courteous tones, without looking around. "I am just concluding a rather delicate experiment, which is like a new baby—it must be carefully watched or there may be an explosion." While he was speaking he was dipping the thermometer into the caldron and noting the result on a pad, or stirring his mysterious brew with what resembled a broomstick handle and sniffing at the fumes that arose from the pot. The mixture gave forth a sour odor, like fermented malt.

We stood in the door feeling rather foolish. At least I *felt* rather foolish. The others were probably more absorbed with wonder at the unusual interior than I, for after my Uncle Eze-

The Hermit

kiel's house a workshop of this character was no novelty to me. That the place was in better order than Uncle Ezekiel's was patent at a glance. There was less dust, fewer broken utensils and nondescript machine parts. The hermit's glass receptacles—of which there was a great number—actually looked as if they had been washed within his lifetime. Most of the glass was ranged on a long wooden shelf, newly painted in dark green, that ran along one of the red-brick walls. On the opposite wall was a similar shelf, empty save for a single object. This I discovered to my amazement to be the puzzle toy called "Folding the Sheep," a simple and baffling plaything that had swept the country. I had seen people solemnly working at it in trains, at my boarding house, in offices, and the thing had stood on Mrs. Van Amsted's sitting-room table. I had been inclined to despise the popular passion for this contrivance of futility. It was an anomaly amidst the scientific clutter of the hermit's laboratory and I wondered if the man resorted to it, as a recreation, between experiments.

He pulled a lever attached to the furnace, and turned to us, removing an eye-protecting ap-

“Mr. Hobby”

paratus, like motoring goggles, from his forehead. “Now I am entirely at your service,” he said, smiling pleasantly, as if our visit at that hour was the most natural thing in the world.

With his ruddy, jovial countenance, partly enshrouded by a round, white beard, and his humorous gray eyes, he resembled a Santa Claus who had not grown fat—a wiry, well-set-up little Santa Claus. He laughed when we explained our predicament.

“You shouted across?” he asked.

“Furiously,” declared Rose.

“I never heard a whisper,” confessed the hermit, chuckling.

“If you have some sort of boat”—began Manor.

“I have n’t,” replied the hermit. “But possibly we may be able to signal some craft in the morning. And on Thursday a boy comes with the scientific journals and green vegetables. He could take you off.”

“To-morrow ’s Thursday,” interjected Martha.

“Ah!” said the hermit. “I thought it was Wednesday. I sometimes lose a day.”

The Hermit

"Does the boy come in the morning?" asked Manor.

"I never noticed," replied the strange man, as if this were of no consequence. "But meanwhile I can put you all up in the cottage. There are several bedrooms with beds, and a linen closet stuffed with linen." He found a lantern in a corner of the room and lit it. "I'll take you over now, in case any one wishes to turn in early."

"Early!" cried Miss Allingham. "My dear man, it's nearly three o'clock in the morning!"

The hermit accepted this information without surprise.

"What time do you usually go to bed?" asked Martha.

"I'm very irregular," confessed the hermit. "Sometimes I forget to go."

Setting down his lantern, he swung the caldron, which hung by a movable crane, away from the fire. Then he unexpectedly inquired if I had hurt my wrist. I explained my accident and he examined the injured member, twisting it about until I nearly screamed with pain.

"Something may be broken there," he said.

"Mr. Hobby"

"You 'd best get a competent surgeon to put the X-ray on it as soon as possible. Meanwhile, I 'll apply something to relieve the swelling."

He produced from a little cupboard, tape, cotton and a splint, and in a twinkling rubbed some soothing liniment over my swollen limb and then bandaged me with surprising deftness.

"Won't he be able to use the arm to-morrow?" asked Martha.

"Lucky if he can use it in a fortnight," was his reply.

Rose, meanwhile, had caught sight of the puzzle toy, and was absently working at it. The hermit glanced at her with a shy smile.

"Can you 'Fold the Sheep'?" she asked.

"I believe I was the first person to solve that puzzle," he said. Whereupon I decided he was mad.

He led the way across the ridge to the cottage and through the front door into a spacious vestibule. His lantern flared upon a huge high-boy standing against the wall, which had a strangely familiar look.

He opened a folding door into a sitting room.

The Hermit

"If you 'll wait here, I 'll see how many bedrooms there are," he said, as he lit the gas.

"Oh, what beautiful furniture!" exclaimed Miss Allingham in astonishment.

Indeed the room would have excited the envy of a collector. It was a veritable poem in gleaming woods, of chairs, sofas, tables and other household goods carved in the most graceful lines. Chippendale was represented there and Sheraton and the other great old masters. A gem of a room! Our host carefully set the lamp upon the center-table of Spanish workmanship, uniquely carved. It was a table calculated to arrest the attention of any one with an eye for furniture, a table to wonder and about over and remember. And like a flash the recollection of that table came into my mind. I had seen it in Uncle Ezekiel's house years before. I glanced hastily about the room. There were the re-backed Hepplewhite chairs, assuredly the Dulworthy chairs. Back of Miss Allingham was a Chippendale sofa that I remembered, and, best test of all, in a corner toward Uncle Ezekiel's clock, with the grotesquely carved canopies supporting its mahogany body and its emblem face painted to resem-

"Mr. Hobby"

ble the room. The long hand, as I recalled, was broken off near the base. Yes, this was the Dulworthy furniture.

Martha, too, was staring at the clock with an expression of bewilderment. I looked from her to the little old man with his worn trousers and his gray flannel shirt, unadorned with a necktie and open at the throat, who was standing in the midst of all this richness with a shy smile of pleasure at the murmurs of appreciation.

"Is this your furniture, sir?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "I merely rent it."

"The clock, Henry"—began Martha.

"I'm sure it's the Dulworthy furniture—Aunt Abigail's furniture," I said. "Tell me—"

"Who are you?" interrupted the hermit in a trembling voice. "Abigail? Where?"

"I am Henry Dulworthy."

He stared, gasping, alternately at me and at Martha and then suddenly he fell in a dead faint upon the floor.

Manor and Martha rushed for some water, while Rose and I chafed his hands and Miss Allingham fanned him.

The Hermit

A glittering object, attached to a string round his neck, had tumbled, when he fell, from the bosom of his shirt. This Martha picked up and held to the light, just as the man opened his eyes. The thing was half a cent, which had been polished until the figures on it were worn thin.

"Mr. Judd," said Martha, "the woman who wears the twin piece of this coin is on Plum Island, not far from here. I'll wager her half is as brightly polished as yours."

The old man sat up, smiling at our wonder.

"Thanks, Martha," he said. "I think I'll be all right now."

XXIII

IN THE FOG

I LAY for the first time in one of the famous Dulworthy beds. But though Manor, who occupied another bed in the same room, had no sooner flung himself on his pillow than he began sounding the trumpet of Morpheus, I found myself too thoroughly aroused by the dramatic surprises of the night to yield to sleep. My thoughts wandered from Rose to Abner Judd.

Judd, while himself somewhat mystifying, had cleared up the mystery of Uncle Ezekiel's annual migrations from Higgsville. These were simply visits to Judd. Judd had been notified by Judge Dilly of Ezekiel's death, but evidently knew nothing of the old man's extraordinary will. Judge Dilly had written that Judd could keep the furniture until September. As I lay awake, I was puzzled to discover why the hermit should maintain that large house

In the Fog

furnished as for a princess. Surely the incongruous establishment had not been kept simply as an excuse to help Uncle Ezekiel by renting his furniture, or for the mere love of furniture for its own sake. I concluded that the eccentricity must have something to do with Aunt Abigail. Yes, that was the sort of house Judd had planned for Aunt Abigail and himself thirty years before. The poor man had materialized his dream—all but the bride. Possibly the house signified, through the years, a melancholy hope. It stood waiting.

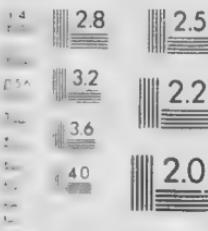
I awoke early, with a poignant realization that I had not supped the previous evening. In fact the pangs of appetite were so intense that I could have performed feats of unimaginable bravery, such as trouncing a head waiter, or stooped to the lowest sort of crime, such as smothering a baby for its bottle, in order to satisfy my immediate craving.

When I rushed downstairs, inspired with a lareenous intention against Mr. Judd's larder, I discovered that Martha was already up. She had found a kitchen excellently equipped in every respect, except in the matter of food. Mr. Judd, it appeared, subsisted principally upon



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"Mr. Hobby"

nuts and raisins and Roquefort cheese. Of these things there was a superabundance, including a five pound cheese, practically intact. Martha had unearthed a few staples, flour, cereals, etc., but there was no coffee or tea or eggs. In fact the place was totally lacking in the essentials of a real American breakfast.

As I entered the kitchen Martha was surveying with an expression of horror an anæmic and flintlike loaf of what only an incorrigible optimist would have called bread. Mr. Judd, whom we assumed to be the baker, had evidently aimed at bread, though he had achieved something that resembled a stone.

"Just think of any human being eating such things, Henry!" Martha exclaimed in an awed tone. "Poor, wretched Mr. Judd!" She thumped the loaf down upon the table and looked at me with sudden determination. "Aunt Abigail must marry him," she declared. "This sort of thing is too absurd!"

Mr. Judd's bread was not an item of our breakfast. Instead Martha baked some biscuits which we ate with molasses, in lack of butter. She also prepared a cereal, which we made palatable with diluted canned milk. The

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whole was washed down with foaming beakers of hot water. It was not the sort of breakfast I would have selected after a supperless night, but we all thought on the whole Martha did very well.

Manor, who evidently was accustomed to start his strenuous business day with a hearty matutinal repast, declared that he would give a hundred dollars for a brace of double-rib lamb chops. He sat at one end of Uncle Ezekiel's priceless mahogany table stoking away great quantities of cereal and glaring malevolently at Abner Judd who was absent-mindedly nibbling a few nuts. Finally Mr. Judd looked up at him with an odd expression of amazement, and the rest of us burst out laughing.

"I don't get you on this hermit business," exclaimed Manor abruptly. "All this living like a squirrel on a desert island! I'd rather be a twenty-dollar a week clerk in a trust company sitting on a stool all week adding 'em up. What's there in it anyway? What's your game?"

"I play with gases and things," explained Mr. Judd apologetically. "Don't you like to play with anything?"

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"Play!" exclaimed Manor contemptuously. "I like to make money. I don't waste a minute on any proposition if there's nothing in it."

"Making money is just play," suggested Mr. Judd gently.

"But you get something out of it," retorted Manor quickly.

"Only money," said Mr. Judd. "You see I'm not interested in money. I'm interested in fuels. The gasoline engine lured me in, but my present hobby is alcohol. I make it out of marshmallow plants. I have a theory that it will become more useful than gasoline. Of course I haven't made any money by experimenting with it. Probably I never shall."

Manor snorted.

"When I need a bit of money I do something silly," continued Mr. Judd. "Last year I earned over \$25,000. I invented 'Folding the Sheep.'"

Mr. Judd looked heartily ashamed of this profitable frivolity, but Manor's attitude changed at once to admiration.

"By Jove, you've got the real stuff in you,

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old scout," he cried handsomely. "Better quit the gases and stick to puzzle work."

Mr. Judd shook his head, with a baffling smile.

I suppose he had never been called "old scout" before. The appellation gave me a shock. But Manor was the sort of person who could with impunity "old scout" the German Emperor or the Pope.

"Do you know anything about aeroplanes?" Martha suddenly asked Abner Judd.

"I have run one," he replied.

"Could you take Aunt Abigail up in an aeroplane?"

Mr. Judd stared at Martha and then he shook with a spasm of laughter until the tears ran down his cheeks.

Martha, with imperturbable seriousness, explained the relation of my aunt's aerial aspirations to the Dulworthy furniture, and the predicament caused by my injured wrist.

"That's just like Ezekiel," declared Abner Judd, chuckling. "He had no sense of humor."

"I should think he showed a highly developed sense of humor," said Rose.

"I know Ezekiel," replied Mr. Judd, shaking

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his head. "He never forgave me for inventing 'Folding the Sheep.' Said I was debauching the populace. He was a serious man. He put the aeroplane proviso in his will for his sister's good. He wanted, so to speak, to save her soul."

"But will you save the furniture?" asked Martha.

"If your aunt will go with me," he answered. "It will be a bitter thing for her to do."

"She will go with you," replied Martha decisively.

While we loafed through breakfast, however, a thick blanket of fog had settled down, shutting us in from the world, and as the sea mists in that part of the coast sometimes held for days at a time, the furniture was still in peril. Though Mr. Judd's sea-going grocer boy might rescue us from the island, the aeroplane ascent could not be made in the fog. But I found myself unable to share Martha's vivid apprehensions in the situation. Even my enforced absence from the Congress gave me no pangs. Rose's presence made my world complete and I desired no better paradise than an island with Rose, entirely isolated in mist.

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But an island isolated from lamb chops and the stock ticker obviously had no attractions for Manor. Missing the opening sessions of the Entomological Congress was an annoyance to him, but missing the opening quotations of the market was a calamity. He was thoroughly out of humor, and, alas for Rose's sentimental plans, Martha's presence did not pacify him in the least, in spite of the fact that after mysterious labors in the kitchen she produced for his dinner three objects (compounded of pressed nuts and some flavoring extract evolved with the aid of Mr. Judd) which looked like lamb chops, and, Manor acknowledged, tasted like lamb chops. As he consumed these he cast at Martha glances of wondering admiration. But that was apparently the extent of the romance. After the meal he resumed his impenetrable grouch.

He was, I thought, particularly curt and surly with me. Of course the man was in love with Rose. I realized it was absurd to suppose he could not be in love with Rose. And he was unquestionably jealous of me. So I did not take offense at his surliness. I felt rather sorry for him.

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Of course Rose and I were very circumspect. Or rather Rose was very circumspect, for she insisted that we must give no cause for suspicion, because our engagement was for the present to remain a secret.

"I don't wish to fight father and Aunt Van and embroil the whole family," she said. "It's best to wait until—until you can take me away, dear, and then we can tell every one."

"I hope I can take you soon," I exclaimed.

"You must take me soon," she quickly whispered.

"I want you to capture the invention with your new bug," she added. "You must make it a peg on which to hang a display of all your knowledge."

"I—I'm not much at showing off," I confessed. "I never gave a public exhibition before."

"You must show off this time," said Rose. "And perhaps your bug will lay golden eggs."

She had high hopes for that bug, and though my reason occasionally obtruded with disquieting doubts, she beguiled me into the belief that rose-colored spectacles were the proper wear.

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And perhaps they were. Unquestionably life is tinted by the vision.

Probably Rose overacted her assumed indifference toward me. At any rate, Abner Judd insisted upon regarding Martha and me as affianced lovers. Beaming upon us with a smile suggestive of paternal blessings, he would discuss our future in the most embarrassing manner. Rose shamelessly assisted in fostering his mistake. Between the pair of them, Martha and I were constantly finding ourselves alone together. When I reproached Rose about this she merely laughed at me. I threatened to pick her up in my arms and run off to hide in the fog.

As the afternoon came on, we supposed an anxious search was being made for us in the fog. But we did not suspect how thoroughly the archipelago was being scoured for Manor. Indeed it was rather remarkable we were not rescued by one of the questing parties. Most of the New York papers had sent special representatives to report the proceedings of the Congress, some of them through Manor's influence and others apparently through a confusion of entomology with bacteriology and a mis-

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taken hope that the Congress would be the vehicle of sensational announcements of new and horrible diseases. As soon as these news sharks discovered Manor's disappearance they impressed every available power boat in Merryport into their service to hunt for him. The evening papers throbbed under such headlines as "Manor and Fiancée Vanish in Motor-boat!" and "Millionaire Scientist Lost in Fog!"

But the indefatigable reporters failed to discover us. Late in the afternoon the adventuresome grocer boy came thumping out through the fog in his converted catboat with a "kicker." We all crowded into the broad-beamed craft and swished off to one of the larger islands where we just caught the Merryport steamboat, making rather slow time in the thick weather. Martha, I remember, carried off with a mysterious air one of Abner Judd's anemic loaves.

She left us at the stop opposite Plum Island, while I continued to Merryport with Mr. Judd and the others, to see to the aeroplane. On the Merryport pier, a disconsolate looking local correspondent who had been frozen out of the searching parties by the New York reporters,

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was suddenly transformed, as he spied Manor, to a delighted and triumphant young man I suppose he secured a "scoop" that earned him great glory.

XXIV

PROVIDENCE, MARTHA, AND THE LOAF OF BREAD

I ENJOYED hugely the remaining sessions of the Congress. It was a rare treat to mingle with three score or more men with a passionate devotion to the hobby that obsessed me. To me the Congress was an entomological orgy into which I flung myself with the enthusiasm of a debauchee. The delegates reveled in bugs, they revealed the penetralia of bug-dom, for them the proper study of mankind was—bugs. With joy I listened to long papers upon the most obscure insects, which to the layman would have seemed hopelessly dull. I delighted in the free discussion which followed these readings and once or twice, greatly daring, I got upon my feet and detailed a few observations of my own. It was a curious sensation to hear myself talking and know that these savants—the representative entomologists of the world—were listening with interest.

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There was a little balcony in the assembly room reserved for lay visitors and there Rose usually sat, sometimes with Manor but more often alone. In the recesses I had hoped to see much of her, but to my disappointment she devoted herself assiduously to old Professor Linderberg, the famous German scientist, who had buried himself for a decade in the country and emerged with enough new insects to fill his three-volume book. Linderberg was spending the year in America, giving a remarkable series of lectures at a great New England university. He was easily the foremost entomologist at the Congress.

Of course I was flattered to see this great man paying attentions to Rose. The pair were an odd sight as they walked about together, Rose smiling up at him and Linderberg, a Caliban of a figure, gross and hairy, bending over her with clumsy gallantry. But it was a sight that palled on me. When Rose was not absorbed with Linderberg she appeared to be caught up by Manor—and I wanted to talk to her myself. At the first opportunity I reproached her for her neglect.

“Jealous?” she inquired archly.

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“Of course not. It’s like seeing a fairy playing with an ogre.”

“I’m quite in love with the ogre,” declared Rose. “And besides, he’s what Bobby would call ‘good business.’”

That was all the satisfaction I could get, though she did condescend to introduce me and the ogre looked me over with an air of paternal appraisement.

“Miss Allingham tells me you haf a vonderful new insec’,” he said. “I shall, mit great interes’, to your paper listen.”

And then, with an autocratic air, he waved me aside and turned to Rose. I could see the minx was laughing in her sleeve, and I began to detest Linderberg. . . .

I missed but a single session, and that when Mr. Judd took Aunt Abigail up in the flying machine. It was a curious trick of fate that the lover whom she had dismissed after a quarrel over his scientific beliefs, because she despised the progress of modern inventions, should come back to her, after a lapse of thirty years, in an aeroplane.

The ascent took place the afternoon after our departure from Mr. Judd’s island. A brisk

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morning wind had cleared away the mist, and while a line of gray clouds was rising out of the west, the air was still. Aunt Abigail stood in the doorway of the Plum Island cottage as the aeroplane came darting up, like a huge dragon fly, from the direction of Merryport, with a monstrous buzzing of its engine that brought the inhabitants of neighboring islands hurrying out to stare.

Abner Judd circled noisily about the island twice and then made an easy landing on a strip of beach.

Martha and I hurried to the aeroplane, leaving Aunt Abigail in the doorway. As Judd went up to her, she did not smile, but I saw her lips tremble slightly. "Abigail!" said Mr. Judd huskily, and took her hand while tears trickled down his cheeks.

"Well, Abner?" said my aunt, in a low voice. "Here you are with a white beard," she added, as if to cover his confusion. "And it's as straggly as your hair. I suppose all the king's horses and all the king's men could n't make you use a brush and comb like other people, if you lived to be a thousand. For you 've never grown up, Abner. You 're still a boy—

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playing with toys like that.” She waved towards the aeroplane.

Mr. Judd laughed. “You see, I had no one to make me grow up.”

“Well, if you’re ready to take me into the air, let’s get it over with,” said my aunt decisively, and she led the way toward the machine.

In a few minutes they were soaring over our heads in broad circles.

The venture really seemed, now that we had come to it, absurdly simple. Even Martha, who had never seen an aeroplane before, declared that it looked perfectly safe. In fact, to me at least, a flying machine under way always appears much more stable and steady than an automobile.

But in that part of the country it was far more novel. Boats were now diverging toward the island from all directions and the people crowding them were waving at the aeroplane and shouting.

“I’m afraid we’ll have a mob here by the time they come down,” I said. “It will scarcely be conducive to patching up that old romance.”

After a few minutes the aeroplane circled



"I never felt so ridiculous in my life."

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wide over the water and then swooped gently upon the beach.

"Did n't it give you a new thrill?" I asked, as I assisted Aunt Abigail from her perch.

"Thrill!" she retorted. "I never felt so ridiculous in my life."

She walked to the cottage with Mr. Judd while Martha and I turned to dispose of the first boatload of inquisitive strangers who were now making fast at our pier.

"Why did the old lady go up in the machine?" was the question shouted at us, as we approached the boat. And that question, in various forms, we were compelled to parry, from successive boating parties, a score of times. We had no intention of exploiting my aunt's private affairs for the multitude, so we simply assured every one the performance was ended and begged them to go.

Some of our visitors, however, persisted shamelessly. I recall one exceedingly pretty girl who begged interminably for a ride. And after we had finally got rid of the last party that came ashore, most of the boats still lingered in the immediate neighborhood, with the eyes of the passengers fixed upon the aeroplane.

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if they expected it to soar into the sky of its own accord.

"Let 's walk about the island for a while and give them a chance to piece those two half-cents together," suggested Martha, glancing toward the cottage.

As she spoke Mr. Judd hurried out of the door alone. His ruddy face had turned gray and he looked frightened. He fairly ran toward the aeroplane.

"I 'll take this back to Merryport," he said.

"Why, the mechanic will come for it," I protested. "We expected you to spend the night with us."

"I can't stay," he declared, fussing with the engine.

"Have you quarreled?" asked Martha abruptly. Mr. Judd busied himself about his machine.

"She—she sent me away," he said huskily. He looked as if he were about to break down.

"Please excuse my questions," said Martha gently. "Did you ask Aunt Abigail to marry you?"

Mr. Judd nodded and gulped. "I 'm an old fool," he said fervently. The engine started

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with a great clatter. "Good-by," he said, climbing into his seat with averted face. We stared after him as he whirled off toward Merryport.

"I suppose he was a bit rusty at love-making," I suggested.

"What do you know about love-making?" snapped Martha, while I flushed guiltily. "They're a pair of ninnies!"

"It's the end of the Dulworthy furniture," I remarked gloomily.

"We'll see," commented Martha. "Come up to the house."

"I want you to stand by me, Henry," she admonished, as we entered. "Wait a minute." She ran up to her room and reappeared with a neatly-wrapped package. "Now for it," she whispered.

We found Aunt Abigail sitting in the dining room. I suspected she had been crying, but she pretended to be knitting as if nothing had happened.

"Aunt Abigail, did you send Mr. Judd away?" asked Martha accusingly.

"We will not discuss that," said my aunt, clicking her needles a bit more rapidly.

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"Why did you do it?" persisted Martha. "He has cared more for you, all these years, than anything else in the world."

Aunt Abigail knitted silently for a little. "He cares more for his scientific messing than for me," she said bitterly. "He has chosen between that and me."

"If he is absorbed in his experiments it is because you would not let him become absorbed in you," declared Martha. "He found solace in his work. It has been his whole life for thirty years. And you treat him as if it were play. For a mere caprice you ask him to give it up."

My aunt was silent, knitting viciously. Martha unfolded her package, revealing one of Mr Judd's anemic loaves, which she ostentatiously placed upon the table near my aunt's elbow.

"What is that?" asked Aunt Abigail.

"A loaf of bread."

"Bread!" Aunt Abigail took it up disdainfully. "It might be a cobble-stone. Some bakers ought to be hanged."

"It's not baker's bread," said Martha. "It's Abner Judd's bread. He baked it himself. It's the kind of bread he eats because

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you won't make his bread for him. That loaf is the symbol of Abner Judd's life."

Aunt Abigail continued to gaze at the loaf, and I thought her face softened slightly.

"Is he eating things like this?" she asked, in an awed voice.

"It is the sort of thing he has probably been eating for the past thirty years," responded Martha.

"Well, serves him right," declared my aunt promptly. She set the loaf down and picked up her knitting again. Martha looked at me despairingly. It seemed that she had failed. And then, unexpectedly, Aunt Abigail gave a great sob. Her knitting dropped into her lap and she bowed her head over the stony loaf and wept.

"I can't let him live like that! I can't! I can't!" she cried. "Ask him to come back, Martha."

"That," said Martha relentlessly, "you must do yourself." And when my aunt looked up questioningly, Martha added: "Write him a note begging forgiveness. Henry can catch him with it as he is returning home on the boat."

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"I can't do that," said my aunt quickly.

"You must do it, Aunt Abigail," insisted Martha. "You must swallow your pride."

My aunt looked appealingly at me.

"Martha is right," I said. "You must swallow your pride."

Martha was already getting pen and ink, and, after a few minutes of hesitation, Aunt Abigail wrote. "There!" she said in conclusion, placing the note in an envelope. "That should fetch him."

She rose, and, with a curtsy of mock humility, handed the missive to Martha. "I have obeyed your ladyship's orders," she said. Then, taking up the loaf, she turned to me with a whimsical smile and added: "It would appear, Henry, that the atomic theory is a poor recipe to make bread by."

XXV

THE PURLOINED BUG

THE Congress was to conclude with an evening reception at Manor's palace. The last afternoon session was reserved for unscheduled dissertations and impromptu discussions and at this I was to read my paper. Whenever I was able to snatch a few words with Rose, she was most solicitous about that paper. It could not have had more importance in her eyes if it were to announce the discovery of the elixir of life. She appeared to believe it a sort of magic discourse, which, as soon as it was delivered, would bring me honors and recognition and a handsome annuity. Of course I could not take this roseate viewpoint seriously. I considered it essentially feminine. It reminded me of some rather intelligent ladies I have met who are convinced that if they are permitted to drop a ballot in the slot the streets will be cleaned, the servant problem solved and

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their children will be brought up automatically amidst the most genteel surroundings. Rose expected me to drop a bug in the slot, so to speak, and make my fortune.

I did not anticipate any reaction whatever from the announcement of my new bug. The world, even the entomological world would roll on placidly. No river would burst into flames. But I felt I owed it to Rose to do my best, and with this idea I gathered my wits together and worked up my rough notes into a coherent essay. I had made a considerable study of hybridization, and it occurred to me that my deductions on this subject were a proper topic for my paper. So I put them in. They were decidedly radical, somewhat at variance with the Mendelian theory.

I was a bit timid about it all, but as I worked I forgot this. The task excited me more and more. My wrist was still badly inflamed and at first the mere physical labor of writing was productive of much pain. At times my wrist appeared to be resting on a bed of razor blades. But in my excitement I even became oblivious of this.

There were two nights in which to complete

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my work. On the first of these I went to my room immediately after supper and was astonished, a short time afterward, to have my aunt knock at the door and insist that I go to bed. It was nearly four in the morning. The second night, with a greater litter of paper, I worked on the dining-room table. My aunt left a watch in the room and I promised her to knock off before one o'clock. But I forgot to look at the watch until Martha came down in the morning to prepare breakfast.

"Henry, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," declared Martha. "You said you had practically finished your paper last night."

"Yes," I answered guiltily. "You see, I did it over again."

"Well, you look like a ghost," said Martha. "Please go right upstairs and get into bed before Aunt Abigail sees you. Try to take a nap."

As I had at that moment completed my final revision, I obediently gathered my papers together and tiptoed upstairs. Fortunately Aunt Abig was not yet stirring.

I got into my pajamas but I was too excited to sleep. Instead I sat on the edge of the bed

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rereading my effusion until Aunt Abigail knocked at my door.

Martha went in to Merryport with me. We had been invited to lunch with Miss Allingham and Rose and she was to attend the Congress in the afternoon to hear my paper. Manor took the ladies for an automobile trip in the morning, while I attended the Congress, and they returned to the hotel to pick me up after the morning session.

We all went out to the Allingham cottage together and Manor said all sorts of frivolous things about my paper, which reposed, neatly typewritten by the hotel stenographer, in my pocket.

In the midst of the luncheon I recalled that I had left some sketches, which I wished to show in connection with my article, on Plum Island. At Rose's suggestion, Manor telephoned for his motor boat to take me to the island. He appeared to have recovered from his jealousy, and his generosity made me feel rather guilty.

A silent mechanic in nautical costume whisked me out to Plum Island and I found the drawings. Aunt Abigail, who regarded the Congress as an outbreak of mild insanity, desired

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me to discover if any of the entomologists had deigned to discover anything as useful as a method of exterminating potato bugs.

We had covered about half the distance back when the motor boat's engine gave a series of irregular coughs and stopped. The silent mechanic, with an air of disinterested curiosity, pressed various levers, turned various wheels, removed divers stop cocks and bolts and put them back again, and ever and anon gave a twist to the starting gear, whereupon the machine would cough feebly and subside. Finally he took a formidable kit of tools from a locker, lay down in the cockpit with his head in the midst of the machinery, and began to tap and hammer and remove wheels and rods and other bits of mechanism. As he worked he whistled "Suwanee River."

I asked what was the matter. His tongue loosened suddenly on a string of sinister technicalities that puzzled and astounded me, though I thought myself fairly familiar with gasoline engines and their ills. Our engine appeared to display as many evil symptoms as a patent medicine pamphlet.

"It 's a very interesting case, sir," concluded

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the water chauffeur, with great appreciation.
“We may be here all afternoon.”

Whereupon he proceeded to fish out all the intestinal parts of the machine and fling them recklessly about.

I explained emphatically that it was necessary for me to get to Merryport with all speed.

“Can’t promise, sir,” he said cheerfully. “Of course I’ll do my best. And if I don’t make it in time I get the sack anyway. The boss don’t stand for accidents.”

He appeared to think this assurance would be a source of consolation to me and went merrily at his work of disintegration, whistling “Suwanee River” over and over again.

There was nothing to do but sit still and hope for the best. But my sleepless night of labor had exhausted my nerves and as the afternoon wore on I got in such a deplorable state of funk that I felt like jumping overboard. I saw the session of the Congress drawing to a close. My name would be called, and there would be no response, and my new bug would be lost to its small measure of fame. Suddenly I realized how much I longed to address the Congress. After eight years of barren toil at my hobby,

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my first opportunity to secure personal appreciation was slipping away. And how disappointed Rose would be!

Perhaps she would despatch another boat in search of me. I scanned the waters anxiously for some approaching craft. But none came near. Off Merryport was a whole fleet of small sailing boats and launches. They were apparently having a race. But the course did not lie in our direction.

I regarded the recumbent mechanic with severe annoyance. He was now thoroughly splashed with oil and grease until he almost resembled a part of the machinery. In spite of this and in the face of his impending loss of occupation, his grimy face, when it bobbed into view now and again, was all alright with enthusiasm. He was as happy as a surgeon with a kidney operation. And his professional enthusiasm irritated me beyond measure. Also his steady whistling iteration of "Suwanee River" irritated me. He was persistently out of tune.

I had heard a church clock somewhere on shore strike two. After an eternity it struck three. Several eons lapsed before my chauff-

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feur stopped whistling and gave a joyous ejaculation.

"Got her," he said. "She was a tough one, all right. We'll be over there in a jiffy as soon as I can assemble the engine."

I feared he would never be able to get the engine together. Humpty Dumpty might have presented no larger problem. The parts were literally scattered all over the boat. But that young man slipped them in with marvelous speed and precision. Even my impatience acknowledged it a short wait before the machinery was all in order and our craft plunged ahead. He was a competent young man.

Manor stood upon the hotel pier. "I was just about to send a rescue expedition," he said. "The girls are crazy with anxiety. I'd think they were both engaged to you, the way they act."

"They have n't adjourned?" I asked.

"Oh, no. Your bug will get in under the wire," returned Manor, smiling.

He remained talking with the boatman while I sprinted to the hotel across a lawn clipped as trimly as a dandy's mustache.

I slipped unnoticed into a seat in the rear

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of the meeting room. At least Rose alone noticed my entrance. She was sitting with Miss Allingham and Martha in the balcony and I saw her expression change quickly from anxiety to radiance as I came in. She shook an accusing finger at me and whispered to her two companions, who looked down and nodded smilingly. Then they turned back toward the speaker, but Rose continued to look at me. I thought she still appeared ill at ease.

Scarr, the editor of the *Entomological Journal*, was reading a paper. I had seen him once or twice at the earlier sessions, but I had not spoken to him and as he was rather near-sighted he probably had not noticed me. Now I recalled that I owed him an apology for J. Zin-sheimer's brusque treatment at my office.

I settled myself back to listen. At first I could not pick up the thread of his discourse. But suddenly he used a phrase that had a familiar ring. What was he talking about? I leaned forward with sudden eagerness, ruffling my hair back as I usually do when excited. Beads of sweat bedewed my forehead. The man was describing my new bug. The scoundrel had appropriated my new bug!

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At first I was too stunned to move. I simply stared at the fellow. His villainy overwhelmed me. I glanced furtively at the balcony. Rose was leaning forward staring at me wide-eyed. Manor, looking bored, had entered and stood beside her.

That glimpse of Rose fired my indignation. So far as I was concerned personally I probably would have made no protest. But I had more at stake than my own reputation. My honor was Rose's now. With a heart wildly pounding I jumped to my feet and staggered down the aisle.

“Stop! Stop!” I cried shakily.

Scarr peered over his manuscript with a sarcastic smile and the presiding officer, Professor Burlingame, the dean of American entomologists, gave a sharp tap with his gavel.

“Mr. Scarr has the floor,” he said curtly.

The delegates turned in their seats and viewed my disheveled person with manifest disapproval. I suppose most of them thought I was drunk.

“You must not let—, —f—” I opened my lips but no words would come. I could only stammer and stutter like an idiot. Out of the

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tail of my eye I saw Rose drag Manor down into the seat beside her and whisper excitedly. Martha and Miss Allingham were staring wildly.

"The gentleman will please be seated," commanded the chairman firmly.

I had my manuscript out of my pocket and waved it frantically at him. "Here—I—" I blithered.

And then the floor rose up at me in long purple waves. For the first time in my life, I fainted.

XXVI

THE MAGIC PAPER

WHEN I opened my eyes the first thing they rested upon was J. Zinsheimer. From this I reasoned that I was still in my office and all my Merryport adventure was a dream—Scarr's theft, the Congress, Abner Judd and the night on the pink island, and Rose's capitulation. So, as I did not wish this to be a dream, and because I felt very weary, I immediately closed my eyes again. Above me I was conscious of considerable suppressed movement and occasional hurried whispering. Fingers were pressed upon my wrist and withdrawn. But I was not curious about these phenomena.

"He'll be all right now," said a deep voice close at hand.

A silence ensued. I could hear a watch ticking. Then, from a distance, came Manor's voice.

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"Burlingame wants to question the boy," he said. "We 'll get to the bottom of this."

There was more whispering; footsteps pattered about; a door closed. I reasoned that Merryport could not be a mere dream after all; and with that I felt stronger and opened my eyes again.

"Drink this," said a tall stranger, handing me a glass. I gulped some brandy. "He 'll be all right now," said the man, his fingers on my pulse.

I lay on a couch in an ante-room and Martha sat at my feet. Rose, I noted, was not in the room, but presently she entered with Professor Linderberg.

"Will he be able to read his paper, doctor?" she asked the stranger.

"I don't think he 'll be up to that this afternoon."

"Let me haf it," demanded Linderberg, and I passed him the document.

"Miss Peddon," called a voice from the door, and Martha went away with the doctor. Linderberg walked to and fro across the room, frowning over my manuscript and muttering to himself.

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"How you scared me, boy dear!" whispered Rose, and I pressed her hand.

"Schön! Schön!" muttered Linderberg, intent on the paper. He quickened his pace as he became more interested.

My senses began to emerge from the bewilderment and confusion to which they had awakened. I recalled suddenly J. Zinsheimer's warnings about Scarr. He was right. I told Rose about it and mentioned my odd delusion of seeing J. Zinsheimer's face when I first returned to consciousness.

"He's here," said Rose triumphantly. "He wrote his fears about that—that villain so emphatically, that I decided to keep my eyes open so when I heard Scarr had told Professor Burlingame he would read a paper about a new bug, I sent for the boy to corroborate your story of the original discovery. I imagine J. Zinsheimer is now putting the finishing touches on Mr. Scarr's entomological career."

Our conversation was interrupted by Professor Linderberg, who suddenly burst into loud guttural encomiums on my paper.

"I care noddings if one stole de insec' or an odder," he cried excitedly, shaking a stubb-

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finger at me. "Dis is highly orichinal. It is right. We must haf it."

Presently Manor returned, with Professor Burlingame and Martha and J. Zinsheimer. My office boy had disposed of Scarr as effectively as he had demolished Mrs. Schwartz. Every one had apologies and congratulations for me over the incident and Professor Burlingame declared he would read my paper to the Congress himself. There had been a short recess, to clear up the ownership of the bug. Now, he announced, my innings would come immediately. The two entomologists went off with my documents and Manor and the two girls followed to see if I made a hit.

"I guess you was surprised to see me, Mr. Dulworthy," remarked J. Zinsheimer, when we were left alone. "Your lady friend telegraphed. She's a smart one, all right. That Scarr won't try to commit a larceny on us any more."

"Johnny," I said, "I begin to think you must be my fairy godmother. At the psychological moment you invariably step in and turn disaster into victory."

But J. Zinsheimer shook his head and looked very solemn indeed. "I just got an awful dis-

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grace on us, Mr. Dulworthy, please," he said.
"Hammel held out for money to start his litigation, and I gave him some, without thinking it was unlawful, and he snitched on us. The Bar Association announced disbarment proceedings, Mr. Dulworthy. Of course I made affidavits and fixed it up, but it was in the paper. I guess you 'd better fire me, Mr. Dulworthy."

J. Zinsheimer looked so tearful that I could not keep from laughing. I suppose to his mind disbarment was the most terrible catastrophe possible.

"Don't take it to heart, Johnny," I said.
"It's really not very important."

J. Zinsheimer stared at me incredulously and then his expression changed to grave reproach.
"I care a lot about it," he declared with dignity.
"I guess I got too much of a hustle on that tip, Mr. Dulworthy."

"How about the Schwartz matter?" I asked, to change the subject.

"We 'll get ninety cents on the dollar, Mr. Dulworthy," exclaimed J. Zinsheimer with enthusiasm.

"We!" I protested. "You 've done it yourself."

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" he said. rt his lit- t thinking us. The ment pro- I made af- he papers. Dulworthy." at I could o his mind atastrophe , " I said. lously and e reproach. th dignity. n that time, " I asked, dollar, Mr. er with en- done it all

J. Zinsheimer looked confused. To cover his embarrassment he fumbled in his coat and produced a paper. "I made out a bill to send to Ravelovsky as soon as we get an opinion," he said. "If you fired me I thought you ought to have a bill ready."

He passed me the document which, at the first glance, made me gasp.

"If it ain't big enough I can easily change it," said J. Zinsheimer apologetically.

"Big enough! Three thousand dollars! It makes me feel like Midas."

J. Zinsheimer looked as if he were trying to recall the name. "Midas? If he was a good bankruptcy lawyer you can bet he soaked his clients, Mr. Dulworthy," he said earnestly. "Clients always get soaked in bankruptcy cases."

"I suppos, they do," I acknowledged. "We 'll let it stand, Johany. It 's your bill anyway. You 've done the work and are entitled to the money."

"Oh, I could n't take that, Mr. Dulworthy," cried J. Zinsheimer, flushing scarlet. "I was only on the job by an accident. I thought—before that disbar trouble—you might give me a

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raise of a couple of dollars, but I can't take all that money."

"Very well," I decided, after consideration. "You'll get your raise in salary and a whooping big bonus besides."

"Thank you, Mr. Dulworthy," said J. Zinsheimer humbly. And then he added, "Listen!"

A sharp rattle of applause came from the meeting room.

"I guess that's a good brief of yours about the new bug," suggested J. Zinsheimer proudly.

Except Rose's voice, that applause was the pleasantest sound I had ever heard. But I wondered that the paper could be so soon concluded. It was not the custom of the Congress to break in on a reading with applause. And I hoped Burlingame had not skipped. However, a few minutes later, came another patter of hand-clapping.

Then Manor strode into the room. "Great hit, that cockroach of yours is making," he said cheerfully. "Caught 'em between the eyes." He began to walk about the room, pausing from time to time to stare at me with an incredulous smile. "You're certainly hell on bugs," he said.

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claimed chuckling, as we heard another outburst.

Next came the sound of chairs being pushed back and a buzz of conversation. And then a crowd poured in on us. In the van was Lindeberg, his face twisted in a smile of triumph that made him resemble a benevolent gargoyle.

"It vas t'rilling—superb!" he growled, and added some German superlatives.

Burlingame, close behind him, shook my hand warmly. "You ought to be devoting all your time to this work, Mr. Dulworthy," he said. Others were at his heels with hearty words of praise and congratulation. Many of them were men whose Olympian names I had worshiped humbly for a long time. I had felt a thrill at hearing them speak at the Congress, at the honor of sitting in the same room with them. It was almost incredible to hear them commanding me and to feel they were treating my obscure self as a valued colleague. Back in the press I spied Rose watching my little ovation with glowing eyes. Life tasted poignant and sweet to me.

Then came the reporters and I was plunged into my first interview.

XXVII

TRIUMPH

I HAD not planned to attend Manor's reception in the evening. I was feeling a bit weary and also utterly overwhelmed by my little triumph and I hoped to steal away to Plum Island and rest. But Rose insisted I should go to the party.

"I want you to strut about in the limelight to-night," she pleaded. "Besides, Bobby will expect you. I've asked him to make you editor of the *Entomological Journal* in place of Scarr."

"I don't exactly see what Manor has to do with selecting the editor of the *Journal*," said.

"He is the *Journal*," replied Rose. "His father bought it before he died."

I didn't believe Manor would offer me the editorship and I rather dreaded the reception (there were to be ladies) but of course, sin-

Triumph

Rose wanted it, I consented to go. I would have gone up in a balloon with Mrs. Van Am'ed if Rose asked me.

I returned to Plum Island for supper with Martha, who was pleased at my little triumph but appeared fearful lest I take it too seriously.

"Remember, Henry, kind words put no meat in the pot," she warned me.

Her sanity shook me from my pinnacle of elation. And later, as I squeezed into my evening clothes, I confessed to myself she was right. I still had all my problems to face. And I still was compelled to wear my antiquated dress garments and was conscious that I could not afford to buy new ones. Getting myself into those venerable rags was always a depressing process.

My boat took me direct to the imposing concrete landing stage on Manor's estate. The motor craft puffed through an arched water gate, into a little basin, where several immaculate attendants, like sailors in a musical comedy, held it and assisted me to disembark. A carpeted, inclined way led to the shore.

As I beheld Manor's glittering palace, set

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amidst its broad acres of lawn and garden, I was smitten with a sudden realization of what Rose was giving up for me. At a word she might become the mistress of that huge house, with an army of servants to attend her, and horses and motor cars and yachts and beautiful things beyond the dreams of princesses. It was incredible that she would not yield to this life of splendor. It was still more incredible that she should renounce it for a man financially in the hallroom stage.

This wonder possessed me while I was being whirled up to the door in an automobile—for though the palace was but a hundred yards from the landing, one was not permitted to walk. By the time I entered the house into a lofty vestibule large enough to accommodate several Harlem flats, I was considerably abashed with all this elegance and painfully conscious of the sausage-skin tightness of my clothes.

While a squad of obsequious grand chamberlains was relieving me of my overcoat and handling that shabby garment as if it were ermine and cloth of gold, I glanced through a broad arched doorway into what appeared to

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be the main reception room, a spacious chamber done in velvety gray paneling and silver. Therein I could see my colleagues conversing with ladies in elegant toilettes, and from somewhere in the rear I could hear a stringed orchestra playing softly the "Meditation" from *Thaïs*. But what particularly held my vision was Mrs. Van Amsted, gorgeous in a remarkably décolleté gown. She stood on a sort of dais in a farther recess of the room and appeared to be acting as hostess, for the various visitors were being led up to her and introduced, and, after a word or two, bowed themselves away. This was disconcerting. I was not prepared to meet Mrs. Van Amsted. I was appalled at the idea of a formal presentation to her. In anticipation I could see her scornfully surveying my shabbiness and annihilating me at a glance. With great reluctance I stammered my name to a person in immaculate evening clothes, who had been delicately importuning for it.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Manor wishes to see you upstairs. This way, please."

He led the way down a corridor, pressed a button in the wall, and a panel flew back dis-

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closing a miniature elevator. Into this we stepped and after he had pressed another button the car ascended. It stopped automatically and the door flew open. Along another corridor, with a carpet as thick as moss, I followed him. He knocked at a door, and, at a summons, ushered me into a room and vanished. I found myself in a delicate pink chamber with pink and gold Louis XIV furniture. The ceiling was decorated with cupids, and mural panels portrayed Watteau shepherdesses and cavaliers, very delicately done. Some of these, however, were obscured by great railroad maps, pinned across the wall with thumb-tacks, and a further incongruity was a flat oak desk with a telephone, near a window. In a swivel chair, with his feet on the desk, sat the master of the palace, smoking a cigarette and darning with ardor and precision a pair of rather faded tan socks.

"Sit down," he said, without interrupting his occupation. "Ever do any editing?"

I had, fortunately, helped to run a magazine in college and was fairly familiar with the mysteries of the craft.

"The old dad left this bug magazine on my

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hands," continued Manor, "and I've decided to keep the thing up as a sort of monument to him. I want it run big—articles by all the leading bugologists of the world and everything done tip-top style. I'll give you a free hand on expenses and three thousand a year for the job. Scarr only got two."

Three thousand dollars! I felt, with a thrill, that this placed me well on the road to Rose. I stammered my gratitude.

"There's another thing," said Manor, stitching away vigorously. "Linderberg has been commissioned to look out for a man to teach bug lore at the University he's lecturing at. He's picked you. Father endowed the job in his will and all that is needed is consent. They'll give you \$1,800 or \$2,000 for a start—and I think it would be a good thing for the *Journal*. How about it?"

It seemed almost too good to be true. I felt the incubus of my law work slipping from my shoulders and I saw Rose in my arms. In my excitement, I jumped to my feet. I wanted to rush downstairs and tell Rose of my good fortune.

Manor threw his darning paraphernalia on

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the desk, and, with a restraining gesture, got up and began striding about the room. He tossed away a newly lighted cigarette and took another from his jeweled case.

"I want to be perfectly frank with you, Dulworthy," he burst out. "I'll bet you're a rotten lawyer and a rotten business man. You're not my sort at all. But I've taken to you—you're so damnably naïve."

His nervous vehemence made me a bit uneasy. "Well?" I queried.

Manor stopped and stared at me oddly. "I want the girl you're in love with and I'm going to have her," he said.

With a sudden illumination I saw the point he had been driving at and I felt my card castle tumbling about my ears.

"So you and Mrs. Van Amsted thought I would give her up for—for a mess of pottage," I cried bitterly. "You may find another editor for the *Journal*. Good-night." I started for the door, trying to preserve a stiff dignity, though I was near tears.

"Keep your little shirt on, Dulworthy," entreated Manor. "I have n't been scheming with Mrs. Van. The girl herself suggested you

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for the job." And, as I half turned in the doorway, he added quickly: "Don't think for a minute I was trying to offer you a couple of cheap jobs to give her up. I realize as well as you that Morgan and Rockefeller combined couldn't put up anything that could wobble the scales against the love of that girl. You're the man for the editorship anyway, but incidentally I'll be glad to see you on your feet so you can give me a good stand-up fight for her. I think I'm playing square. I might have sneaked in on you without a word, but I've given you fair warning now."

"You could n't sneak in, Manor," I said, considerably mollified. "You'd only be wasting your time. She loves me and I'm as certain of her as I am of the stars."

"Very well," he retorted, with a laugh. "I'm going to get her. I don't wish to brag, but I've never taken up a proposition yet, that I did n't get away with."

"The point is," I suggested, "that Rose is not a proposition."

"What," asked he, "has Rose got to do with it?"

"I suppose," I said, growing angry again,

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"when you want to swallow a rival concern, you first fix some of its directors. But even if you have fixed Mrs. Van Amsted and Mr. Allingham, it does n't necessarily follow that you can gobble up Rose. She's not a street railway."

Manor was looking at me with a countenance of bewilderment. "I'm not talking about Rose," he declared unsteadily. "I'm talking about Martha Peddon. Are n't you engaged to Martha Peddon?"

It was my turn to stare. "This is all a terrible mistake," I said. "I'm engaged to Rose Allingham. Did n't Rose suggest my appointment."

"I don't remember," stammered Manor. "Martha gave me the idea."

Then I had to sit down and explain, while Manor laughed and shouted and clapped me on the shoulder and danced about the room and generally acted like a lunatic.

"Do you mean to say," he roared, in a sudden outburst of incredulity, "you've known Martha all your life and you're in love with Rose?"

The question appeared absurd and fatuous to

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me. "Of course," I declared with indignation.

Manor laughed again and then he rushed to the telephone. "The landing," he demanded. And then: "Send the car up for me and have the motor-boat ready immediately." He slammed down the receiver and dragged me toward the door. "This party will have to get on without me for a while," he said. "I'm going to Plum Island to ask Martha Peddon to marry me."

"You're in a fearful hurry," I protested.

"You bet," he cried. "There are about a million eligible young men in this country and I'm not taking any chances with Martha. If you want anything in this world you've got to go after it and get it—quick."

I laughed as well as a man could while Manor was squeezing the blood out of his hand, for by this time the magic elevator had taken us to the ground floor and we had stepped out in the corridor. A flunky came flying toward Manor with an overcoat, which he donned as he ran.

"Good luck!" I cried warmly.

"I rush my luck. Just now I feel as if I

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could get away with the moon." With that he darted out of the door, narrowly avoiding a collision with Professor Linderberg who was peering about for me.

"Mr. Manor is splendid," gasped the professor, staring after the young man. "He is de symbol of American success—always making vat you call de hustle."

Then he drew me upon a settee and talked in a fatherly way about the work offered me at the great university and the career that lay before me. "Und now," he said finally, "ve vill choin de ladies."

My self-consciousnes over my shabby habiliments was shamed by Linderberg's serene unconsciousness of his own atrocious evening clothes. Beside him I was a Beau Brummel. His trousers drooped about his legs like sacks after the fashion of the trousers of statesmen and patriots depicted in bronze in Central Park and his coat was so shapeless and rumpled that it looked as if it were made of accordions sewn together, but he dragged me into the glittering salon with an eagerness disdainful sartorial detail. Entomologists were the predominant social fad, and the assemblled lad

Triumph

lionized the visitors and listened to the shop talk with a more than polite show of interest. From one brilliant feminine group to another Linderberg conducted me, explosively heralding in broken English my discovery.

"A young man of great promise," he kept repeating. "His insec', it is vonderful—vonderful. In Chermany dey will hear of it mit great chov."

Everybody was nice to me, and indeed I was almost embarrassed at the attention I received. I was really the center of attraction. I saw Mrs. Van Amstel staring at me while I stood in a circle of young women who hung upon my words with exclamations of at least superficial wonder and delight. My triumph must have puzzled Rose's aunt. Doubtless it annoyed her, too. She had probably thought me a most obscure person and it must have been inconceivable to her that I could be the hero of the evening. Several times I caught her watching me furtively with an expression of angry bewilderment. I imagine she was waiting for Professor Linderberg to bring me to her in order to demolish my pretensions. But by what I considered rather adroit dodging, I

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managed to elude her. Her countenance gave me more joy than the cordial visages of all the other ladies.

While I was occupied with my social duties I kept looking about for Rose. It was some time before I spied her, surrounded by a ring of entomologists of assorted ages who appeared to be enjoying themselves hugely. Several times I tried to break away and go to her, for I burned to tell her of my fortune, but Linderberg appeared intent on keeping me captive until I had paid my respects to every other lady in the room. Once she smiled at me across the heads, but I never seemed to get any nearer to her. It was horribly tantalizing to be kept murmuring polite banalities about my new bug to persons whose names I could not catch, with Rose at once so near and so remote all the time. I patiently endured for an eternity. And finally I saw her disengaged and rushed to her.

“When can you marry me, Rose?” I whispered fiercely.

“Mr. Hobby! Have you really got—”

“Five thousand a year,” I interrupted. “Let’s get out of this where I can tell you all about it.”

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Once she smiled at me across the heads

Triumph

We tried the conservatory, but that appeared unpleasantly crowded. "We'll go home," said Rose.

As we fled for the door I saw Mrs. Van Amsted watching us. She was conversing with Professor Burlingame and her malevolent glances must have puzzled him.

Rose ran to the ladies' room for her wraps while the silent flunkys robed me, and just as she returned, Mrs. Van Amsted appeared in the corridor.

"Rose, where are you going?" she demanded.

"Home, Aunt Val," replied Rose sweetly.

"I insist upon your having a proper escort," declared her aunt.

"Mr. Dulworthy is the most proper escort in the world," said Rose. "You see I'm engaged to marry him."

"You are certainly not engaged to him," said Mrs. Van Amsted emphatically. "Your father has strictly forbidden—"

"Don't worry about us, Aunt," suggested Rose. "Our engagement is copper-riveted, fireproof, burglar-proof and aunt-proof."

I stood feeling awkward and embarrassed at Mrs. Van Amsted's sharp attack and with a

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consciousness of furtive flunkey curiosity. It was a relief to see Manor come in with the radiant air of a man who has, after all, “got away with the moon.”

“Robert, will you see Rose home?” asked Mrs. Van Amsted immediately.

“Certainly,” said Manor.

And then, looking at me in a puzzled way, he added: “Is n’t Dulworthy going to see her home?”

“It is scarcely my province, Robert, to remind you of your obligations toward Rose,” declared Mrs. Van Amsted. “Mr. Allingham has ordered this—” (she favored me with a malignant glance) “this person to cease annoying his daughter. Kindly see your fiancée home.”

In his turn Manor now looked embarrassed, but only for an instant. Then he turned to Rose with a mischievous smile. “Does this—this fellow annoy you, Rosie?” he asked, with an excellent imitation of Mrs. Van Amsted’s manner.

“He pesters me outrageously,” replied Rose, unabashed. “I’ve decided to marry him to get rid of him.”

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If Mrs. Van Amsted's glances were daggers, they would have slain us all.

"I'm afraid you're on the wrong wire, Mrs. Van," cried Manor, laughing. "I'm engaged to another young woman, anyway. Her name's Peddon."

"Impossible!" ejaculated Mrs. Van Amsted, flushing through her rouge.

"I can scarcely believe it myself," returned Manor cheerfully.

"It's most outrageous and indecent," cried Mrs. Van Amsted. "I shall leave immediately."

With that she strode heavily toward the ladies' room.

"Run home and spoon, you two," admonished Manor, and he hastened after Mrs. Van Amsted.

Rose gave me her hand and we slipped out together into the moonlight.

XXVIII

THE PERFECT CHAIR

DISDAINFUL of motor cars, Rose and I took hands and ran, like truant children, down a graveled drive, along a path, across a lawn, through a hedge, over another lawn and through a little wood to a stone wall at which we stopped, panting and breathless. I was glad to run. The act of running symbolized my feeling of escape, not merely from Mrs. Van Amsted, who was but an annoying detail, but from all the wretched, illogical striving after shadows, the futility and the loneliness of the life I had left behind me. I felt immeasurable vistas opening before me, mysterious vistas of life which I knew would reveal phenomena of wonder and delight. And no matter how far I sped, I realized I would never again be lonely. The quick clasp of Rose's warm little hand was assurance of that.

The Perfect Chair

The waning moon squinted down at us while we leaned against the wall and Rose put her cheek against mine.

"Is n't it wonderful!" I cried.

"Like a fairy tale," said Rose.

Over the wall was a little field, sparkling with goldenrod, and beyond this a house, Rose's house. As we looked at it an inconsequential black figure left the house and began moving down a path toward the high-road. It was J. Zinsheimer, who had been entertained at supper by Miss Allingham and was now leaving to catch the midnight train. We leaped the wall and, shouting like savages, rushed upon my astonished office boy. When he saw who the mad creatures were, he smiled upon us paternally.

"I 'm going out of the law business, Johnny," I cried. "We 'll have to get you a new job."

"I 'm sorry, Mr. Dulworthy," he said, his eyes roaming questioningly from Rose to me.

"He 's found money in bugs after all," Rose explained.

"I thought there was no money in bugs," said J. Zinsheimer reflectively, "but I guess there 's money in anything if you get a hustle

"Mr. Hobby"

on about it. Perhaps the Lord didn't mean you for a lawyer, Mr. Dulworthy."

"I don't think He did," I acknowledged, "but there's no doubt of His intentions about you and I must see that you get a decent start."

"Oh, don't bother about me," said J. Zinsheimer. "Lubin and Kohlmann, the lawyers for one of the other creditors against Schwartz, offered me a fine job, Mr. Dulworthy. Of course I'd like it better to stay with you."

"I'm afraid there wouldn't be much future with me, even if I stayed in the law," I said.

"I—I—" stammered J. Zinsheimer, and suddenly two tears rolled down his cheeks. "G-good-night, Mr. Dulworthy," he said huskily, and walked abruptly away.

Within the house Rose and I found Miss Altingham just starting upstairs for bed, and when she beheld our radiant faces she held out her arms and enfolded us both to her ample bosom in a maternal embrace. She was, I discovered, one of those persons possessed of the sympathetic art of making the happiness of others her own. She rejoiced as much as either of us, and I think she kissed us both.

The Perfect Chair

I was still a bit apprehensive about Mr. Allingham, but both ladies reassured me.

"Father will be all right now," declared Rose. "I 'll fix him. Sometimes his bark is quite appalling, but I 'm sure he would n't bite me."

"I wish he were here," I said.

We decided that Rose would write him and I should call on him as soon as I returned to New York. And while we were discussing this I discovered Miss Allingham had vanished. It appeared she must possess the additional art of self-elimination.

Rose led me into a library sitting-room with a huge fireplace in which some logs still burned, for there was a slight chill in the night air. Before the fire, soft, capacious, inviting, with broad arms and a sheltering back as tall as a wall, stood a huge fireside chair.

"Father's chair is the loveliest chair for two," said Rose. "I feel I have never really treated it right—there 's such a lack of variety in always sitting there with just father. But to-night we 'll give the chair a new thrill."

So I sat in the chair and Rose snuggled in with me and put her head on my shoulder.

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"Is n't it a sentimental chair?" she sighed. "I knew it was n't simply a stuffy old library thing to sit reading books in."

"It is," I said, "the sort of chair they have in the best suites in Heaven."

So, there before the fire, we sat and discussed our future, which had suddenly become so clear and golden.

"I knew you 'd win, though I did n't expect the victory so soon," said Rose. "How glad and proud I am, boy dear!"

"Your victory," I retorted. "So far as I was concerned, it was scarcely a stroke of genius. It was just a stroke of luck."

"If you were not you, the luck would n't have come," declared Rose decisively. "Did you expect to have to kill dragons for me?"

"I wish I could kill a dragon for you," I replied. "But I suppose if I had to kill one I should probably forget my lance and be gobbed up. I 'm afraid you 're not going to marry much of a dragon-slayer, dear."

"I 'm going to marry the man I love, and I shall help him slay his dragons," whispered Rose, and drew my face to hers and kissed me.

The Perfect Chair

I am writing this in our cottage on the hill. From my desk beside the broad window I look across our garden, gay with spring, down to the town below with its dark cluster of college buildings where I do my work.

A few minutes ago there was a commotion in the garden. A series of sharp howls indicated that Bobby Manor, Jr., aged two and a half, was pulling the hair of Gertrude Dulworthy, aged three. Martha, who is visiting us for a few days, has run out to quell the aggressions of her son and administer a rebuke. Somewhere in the house Rose is singing.

Yes, my house has been Rose's house for four years. For, though Mrs. Van Amsted remained adamant and has not favored us with any communication since that memorable night of Manor's party, Mr. Allingham capitulated handsomely. When I went to ask him for Rose, he had already made some arrangement, presumably under Manor's auspices, to resume business, and I found him, despite his mannerisms, a kindly, courteous gentleman eager to make amends for his former cavalier treatment.

By that time, of course, I was no longer a

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nobody. The newspapers had bruited my name across the land. The incommensurate outbreak of publicity over my new bug has always puzzled me. Probably I shall never understand it. I have some of the clippings before me, and in particular I am arrested by one caption (in rather a conservative paper, too) topping a two-column article, which inspires me with amazement and dismay.

NEW BUG STAGGERS ENTOMOLOGISTS

MARKABLE INSECT FOUND IN
CITY HALL UPSETS ESTAB-
LISHED THEORIES

PEPPER IS IMPEACHED

HIS SYSTEM OF CREATION IS
NEW YORK LAWYER
MAKING A COVERY

I recall, on my return from a
pile of letters, like a
shocked my office as a
There were communications from

The Perfect Chair

who wished to exhibit my bugs, and from a Louisville manager who desired me to exhibit my. If, and from cranks and busybodies beyond reason. And the army of visitors! They ranged from a little old woman with a tin pail which she expected me to fill with an infallible
cur to the extermination of bedbugs to a serious-minded young clergyman from the South who begged me to lecture before his church's Guild on the downfall of the Devil and the rehabilitation of Adam. Actually he thought I could reëstablish Eden and the Hebraic theory of origins! I was compelled to explain to him at great length that my bug had absolutely no cosmological significance, and finally departed in an apparently heartbroken condition. More valuable, and scarcely less interesting, was a call from a representative of the publisher to whom I had submitted the plan of a garden book. This person was also a serious-minded young man, but he craved my manuscript and produced a contract and a check for \$250 advance royalties. Within a few hours I had converted that check into Rose's engagement ring. . . . Such was my ephemeral notoriety. Now I am

"Mr. Hobby"

merely a prosy professor and scientific editor and the metropolitan press has forgotten my existence. . . .

Last week a very splendid young man came to visit over Sunday. He was J. Zinsheimer of the law firm of Lubin, Kohlman, and Zinsheimer, which enjoys a bustling practice in the bankruptcy courts. J. Zinsheimer is taller than when he served as my office boy, and betrays a trace of localized embonpoint, but he is just as deferential and fully as much a believer in "getting a hustle on." Rose fell in love with him so frankly that I told her I was jealous. And as for J. Zinsheimer, he fell in love with Gertrude. He asked so many questions about the cost of baby clothes and feeding, that Rose is sure he contemplates making some damsel with an Old Testament name Mrs. J. Zinsheimer.

Aunt Abigail, who has become wonderfully human and grandmotherly since she married Abner Judd, has taken a violent fancy to Rose. She and Judd occupy her house in Higgsville, where the Dulworthy furniture is exhibited in all its glory. Near the house Uncle Abner, as we call him, has built a small chemical labora-

The Perfect Chair

tory. Aunt Abigail has a habit of sitting there contentedly amid the outrageous odors and explosive phenomena attendant on her husband's experiments. Manor calls the pair Darby and Joan. Mr. Judd has become rich through Manor's exploitation of some of his patent processes for the use of alcohol as a fuel. "You make me a Croesus," Manor quotes him as complaining, "and all I need is a suit of clothes every other year and some nuts."

Rose has been calling me. I am made aware that luncheon is ready, has been ready for some few minutes and awaiting a rather incompetent carver to take his place at the head of the table

"I wonder that you didn't starve to death before I came to drag you to meals," says Rose. "Will that silly book never be done?"

"There was J. Zinsheimer," I replied apologetically. "And as for the book, I have just finished it."

Rose rushes in and leans over my chair, patting my cheeks and taking remarkable liberties with my hair, so that it is with the greatest dif-

“Mr. Hobby”

ficulty I can steady myself to pen these last few lines.

“Really finished?” she cries.

“All but the title. I don’t seem to be clever at titles.”

“I’ve been thinking of a title,” declares Rose. “Do let me write the title.”

With considerable curiosity I am yielding her the pen. She writes:

“MR. HOBBY.”

THE END

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